RASH VOWS,

OR,

THE EFFECTS OF ENTHUSIASM.

VOL. II.

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… Rajah . 1829

OR,

THE EFFECTS OF ENTHUSIASM.

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A NOVEL.

Tranflated from the FRENCH of

MADAME DE GENLIS,

AUTHOR OF THE THEATRE OF EDUCATION,
ADELAIDE AND THEODORE, *&c. &c.*

Eh! le vœu le plus libre et le plus volontaire,
Au Dieu qui prévoit tout, peut fembler téméraire!

LA HARPE.

La modération eft le tréfor du fage. VOLTAIRE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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RASH VOWS.

I HAD procured a chaplain to be engaged for me in London, whom I expected with impatience. He did not arrive till after the expiration of five months. He was a man of merit and virtue. His arrival afforded me the first emotion of pleasure, which I had experienced since my departure from London. I was always religiously inclined, but true religion can never be in alliance with violent passions; its sublime and consolatory sentiments require a mind free from an attachment to the world, and mine was not yet arrived at that happy state. Thus the idea of

having obtained an enlightened director of my ſpiritual concerns in Mr. Conolly, (for that was the name of the clergyman,) occupied my imagination much leſs than the hope I entertained of gaining a reſpectable friend, who would do me juſtice. The duty of confeſſion, which is generally eſteemed the moſt painful preſcribed by the Catholic religion, becomes a confidence the moſt conſolatory to the hearts of virtuous men, wounded by the ſhafts of calumny. It is highly gratifying to ſuch minds to be able to talk of their innocence with a certainty of inſpiring no ſuſpicion of their ſincerity. It was thus that I haſtened with eagerneſs to lay open my whole ſoul before Mr. Conolly; and from that moment, being aſſured of his eſteem, his ſociety became as neceſſary as it was agreeable to me. He led me to make reflections of great utility to me, by ſhewing me that all my misfortunes ſprung from myſelf. In fact, Providence had granted

granted me a husband of an amiable character, the tenderness and mildness of whose disposition seemed calculated to ensure my felicity; and I should have been completely happy, if I had been capable of regulating my feelings by the wise and salutary precepts of religion: but blindly surrendering myself to the dominion of the most impetuous of passions, I sacrificed my quiet, my health, and my reputation. In short, all the blessings of nature and fortune became useless, or rather served no other purpose than to augment the bitterness of my affliction, and to give additional force and notoriety to the calumnies of my enemies.

Two months after the arrival of Mr. Conolly, I obtained intelligence of a circumstance which, from the pleasure it excited in my breast, convinced me how much I still loved lord Clarendon. I read in the public papers that the inconstant Ophelia had had a rupture with

him, and had quitted him for the young earl of ***. Mr. Conolly advifed me to take advantage of fo fortunate a period, and try to recall the affections of lord Clarendon. He offered to fet out immediately to London, to obtain an interview with his lordfhip, and to fpeak to him with all the energy of feeling and of truth, without difcovering that I was acquainted with his intention. I oppofed this project very feebly, and the honeft chaplain departed without delay. Our hopes were cruelly deceived! Mr. Conolly wrote me word at the expiration of a month, that, notwithftanding repeated and very preffing folicitations, he had not been able to obtain even a moment's audience of lord Clarendon. He concluded his letter by informing me that his fucceffion to an eftate in Ireland called him thither, and that he was on the eve of departure for that kingdom. This letter renewed all my grief. My affliction, however, was

ſurpaſſed by my reſentment; love was not extinguiſhed in my breaſt, but it no longer governed with abſolute ſway; indignation, wounded pride, and vain regret were then the cauſes of my greateſt trouble; and ſuch emotions are the more eaſily ſupported, when one has experienced the tortures of the tendereſt and moſt unfortunate attachment. I was, above all, alarmed at finding myſelf in perfect ſolitude; I felt deſirous to give vent to my ſorrow, and was anxious to divert my mind from reflecting on my miſery. Mr. Conolly's departure for Ireland diſtreſſed and afflicted me; it appeared to me that he ought to have ſacrificed his hopes to have returned to offer ſome conſolation to my woes. The unfortunate are unreaſonable and unjuſt in their expectations; becauſe their ſufferings rendering them credulous, they are eaſily induced to believe that the compaſſion they inſpire is in proportion to their misfortunes, and therefore expect

every attention which may tend to alleviate the keenneſs of their feelings; and if diſappointed, they imagine that they are deceived and betrayed. In the condition to which I was reduced, I was no longer capable of contributing to my own relief; my talents ceaſed to afford me a reſource; muſic enervated my mind, and brought to my recollection ſcenes I wiſhed for ever to forget. I was incapacitated from application to any thing, and I had beſides been too well acquainted with the happineſs and ſatisfaction experienced in giving pleaſure to others, to be able to exert myſelf without the incitement of emulation. Reading had no longer charms for me; books on ſerious ſubjects fatigued me, and romances agonized my heart. The return of ſpring, far from contributing to give me eaſe, added only to my melancholy. During the whole winter I had not left the houſe; from the firſt appearance of ſpring I began to take long walks,

walks, and beheld, with as great emotion as fear, the woods and meadows through which I had ſtrayed in times of greater happineſs. I entered into my cloſet, the paintings in which continually recalled to my imagination the lively image of my paſt felicity, and remained there without diſquietude: being accuſtomed to ſee them every hour in the day, I at length began to regard them with indifference; but the trees and the verdure of the fields that preſented themſelves to me only in my walks, made the ſtrongeſt impreſſion upon me. It is by means of our feelings and by the force of our imagination that the continuance of ſorrow and of an unhappy paſſion is prolonged; there is a fair proſpect of comfort and of a radical cure, when cuſtom has familiariſed us to thoſe objects which may bring to our recollection the ſubject of our regret. This is the reaſon why perſons endowed with a lively imagination poſſeſs greater ſenſibi-

lity than others; it often happens that they do not love with greater fervency, but they forget with greater difficulty; a mere nothing will awaken in their minds the remembrance of the most distant event, and renew the delusion of feelings which were almost extinguished. I was married early in the spring; and I cannot give an idea of the emotion which the singing of the birds, the sight of the opening blossoms, and the first verdure of the fields, excited in my breast. Thomson brought me one morning a nosegay of violets and primroses, which I had not yet seen; I shuddered at the sight of them, for I had been accustomed to receive from lord Clarendon a similar present every day in this month..... The fragrance of those flowers so forcibly presented to my fancy the time when I loved with the greatest ardour, that at the moment, I imagined that I loved still more than ever. I placed this enchanted nosegay on

on a table, and obſerving a chair by the ſide of me, I exclaimed, Great God! there he ſat, in this very apartment, on the very chair which I now behold. He it was that gathered theſe flowers, and has juſt brought them to me! . . . . O, what an intoxicating deluſion exhales from thoſe perfumes! . . . . . As I ſpoke theſe words, alarmed at the wandering of my fancy, I aroſe in haſte, and, with tears in my eyes, went and ſhut myſelf up in another room. Theſe new impreſſions were inſenſibly effaced like others which had preceded them, but though I was freed from the violence of anxious feelings, I did not regain my tranquillity. Strong paſſions agitate, torment, and rend the heart; but they occupy it entirely, and while they are in force, one is at leaſt relieved from *ennui*: they are an inexhauſtible ſource of new feelings and ſentiments; but when they are extinguiſhed, they leave a frightful void in the ſoul. Peace, that

first of human blessings, is the happy fruit of discretion; I experienced too strongly, that it is not to be recovered in an instant: liberated at last from a fatal passion, I was not capable of estimating the value of that liberty to which I was restored; it appeared to me, that life without a serious attachment, ceased to be any thing but an insipid vegetation. I was compelled to renounce love for ever; and yet an object of adoration was necessary to my happiness, and I imagined that friendship would afford one. Then it was that I severely reproached myself for having neglected many favourable opportunities of acquiring a friend. I did not regret the transitory connections formed through vanity, which merit not the name with which they are honoured; but I had spent two years in London, and in the crowd which at first surrounded me, I no doubt might have found a woman whose heart would have sympathized with mine. Alas! can a heart occupied

occupied by love devote itſelf to any thing elſe? and dares it, in the ſtate of delirium occaſioned by the agitations of that paſſion, offer itſelf to friendſhip? no; it is only worthy of that bleſſing when it can be entirely ſurrendered to it. It is only a mind free and at eaſe that can reliſh the charms of a ſentiment ſo pure; and he who termed friendſhip *the wiſe man's paſſion*, was equally capable of valuing and defining it. Theſe different ideas naturally ſuggeſted to me the remembrance of lord Elby; he was the only friend I had ever had, and the only perſon in the world who knew me thoroughly, and was in a condition to do me complete juſtice. He wrote to me regularly, and I anſwered him punctually; his letters were always dated from Paris, and addreſſed to his correſpondent in London, who tranſmitted them to me. I received them for a long time with the indifference I felt for every thing which had no relation to lord

 Clarendon,

Clarendon, but for ſome months paſt I had found them more intereſting, and at length they became neceſſary to my happineſs. One muſt have lived in perfect ſolitude to conceive the gratification of an epiſtolary correſpondence with an amiable perſon whom one eſteems. The earl had a ſuperior underſtanding, and wrote with uncommon elegance; I expected the arrival of the poſt with an impatience which increaſed every day. When I read his letters, I was aſtoniſhed that I had not been more ſenſible to ſuch diſtinguiſhed merit; and, on my part, I wrote to him more carefully, more circumſtantially, and, above all, with ſtronger expreſſions of friendſhip than I had been accuſtomed to. As I addreſſed him with perfect confidence, I informed him that the remembrance of lord Clarendon no longer diſturbed my repoſe. In anſwer to one of theſe letters, he wrote me word, that before he ſet out for Italy, he was

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under the indiſpenſable neceſſity of returning to England, and reſiding ſome weeks in London; he added, that it would give him great pain to be ſo near without ſeeing me, eſpecially on the eve of another journey, which would at leaſt continue for two years; and that, if I would permit him, he would make a tour into Derbyſhire, viſit Matlock, and would from thence come to ſee me *incognito*, and paſs a few hours with me. I felt that, after the calumnies of which I had been the object, prudence and decorum obliged me to give a poſitive refuſal to ſuch a propoſition; but I eagerly deſired the interview; and I thought that lord Clarendon, who knew my innocence, could not reaſonably condemn the ſtep; that I was obliged to account to him alone for my conduct; and that it would be folly, and even cowardice, to ſacrifice to the vain opinions of the world the pleaſure of ſeeing a faithful friend for a few moments. This was bad reaſoning; for to reſolve to take

take a ſtep which would neceſſarily lead to evil interpretations is in ſome degree juſtifying calumny, or at leaſt renouncing the right of complaint. But to ſet at defiance public opinion, to abandon all circumſpection, and to imagine that the way to take revenge for injuſtice is to give freſh arms to malevolence, is the greateſt misfortune which can happen to perſons ſuffering under malicious ſlander, who to little experience of the world unite a certain haughtineſs of character. I replied to the earl's letter, that I ſhould feel great pleaſure in converſing with him, but that I would either not ſee him at all, or would receive him openly and without concealment. In fact, after I had adopted the imprudent reſolution to ſee him, I ought not to have concealed it. When one decides upon riſking a trifling action, which has nothing criminal in it, one ſhould reſolve to perform it with the courage of innocence. I received no anſwer to this letter, and I ſuppoſed that the earl was on the road and

would

would ſhortly arrive; I was not deceived. I expected him with an impatience mingled with ſome degree of emotion; I felt that his preſence would forcibly recall to my mind all the miſery I had endured: to this idea I added the dread of the falſe interpretation which malice would not fail to give to this viſit. Theſe various thoughts diſtreſſed and agitated my mind; in the mean time I counted the hours, and time ſeemed to paſs on more ſlowly than uſual. One evening, as I was ſitting in a little pavilion ſituate in the middle of a wood near my houſe, I heard the ſound of haſty footſteps in the path which led to the pavilion; I liſtened attentively; when ſuddenly the door opened, and I beheld the earl ſtanding before me: my firſt impulſe was to meet him and offer him my hand, but, on a moment's reflection, with bluſhes in my face, I ſtopped, and the cruel fear that this ſort of perplexity was obſerved by him, created ſo much embarraſſment, that I entirely loſt my ſpeech, and was unable to look up. The

earl

earl did not appear to obſerve my confuſion, but advancing eagerly, with an air of tenderneſs he laid hold of my hands, which he kiſſed, and after uttering a few half-formed words, we ſat down. His frank and manly behaviour ſoon ſet me at eaſe: at length I had the courage to look up at him, when I was alarmed at his haggard looks and the alteration of his perſon. When I expreſſed theſe ſenſations, he ſaid, " I did not wiſh to excite your ſenſibility by ſorrowful details, you had miſery enough of your own to encounter, therefore I have never mentioned mine in my letters to you: but if the monſtrous ingratitude of lord Clarendon has afflicted you, I have not ſuffered leſs from his abſurd injuſtice towards me. I loved him with enthuſiaſm; my friendſhip for him was the ruling paſſion of my heart for fifteen years; a ſentiment of that nature, do not doubt it, leaves ſtronger impreſſions on the mind than love can poſſibly do. Thus," added he, ſmiling, " I have not been able to recover

my

my health, but you are already reſtored to your former beauty." This ſpeech affected me ſtrongly, and the laſt ſentence excited an emotion of ſurpriſe, which I could not conceal, for lord Elby had never before ſaid a ſingle ſyllable on my perſon, and this ſort of compliment appeared aſtoniſhing from his lips. "At preſent," ſaid I to him, "it is perfectly indifferent to me whether I am beautiful or not, but I believe it is the firſt time in my life I ever heard you make ſuch a remark."—"In fact," replied the earl, "I am not naturally of a diſpoſition very gallant; beſides eſteem alone was ſufficient to interdict the uſe of ſuch language towards you; and before I had avowed the moſt tender attachment to you, I was not tempted to employ it. The adored wife of lord Clarendon was in my eyes not a woman, but a celeſtial being, a divinity whom I ſhould have thought I profaned by daring to contemplate her perfections. My admiration ſtill preſerves the religious reſpect for you with

with which the title then fo facred infpired me; the motive is changed, but the feeling is unaltered. Thus you will always continue to be the woman whom I fhall reverence the moft, and whom I fhall praife the leaft. Yet," continued he, " I muft ftill praife you for one thing, which has entirely confirmed me in the opinion which I had formed of your mode of thinking; it is my open and undifguifed reception here; you have made me blufh with fhame at the timid concealment I propofed; for in truth fuch precautions are neceffary to vice alone, but virtue would degrade itfelf by employing them."—" Yet," replied I, " do you not think that your enemies and mine may take a ferious advantage of this ftep?"—" By no means," faid he, interrupting me.—" I ftayed four days in London, I was at court, and mixed with the great world; I thought your laft letter fo admirable, that I fhewed it to many perfons capable of appreciating its value, and among others to the duchefs of ***, who was fo enchanted

enchanted with it, that ſhe mentioned it to the Queen, and that princeſs expreſſed a ſincere eſteem for the frankneſs of your conduct. On the whole," purſued he, "I clearly ſaw that you were much miſtaken in the ſuppoſition that your reputation had been tarniſhed; all the world eſteems and pities you, and the ſcandalous conduct of lord Clarendon is of itſelf ſufficient for your juſtification."—"You relieve my anxiety," ſaid I; "but nevertheleſs I am cruelly calumniated in the public papers."—"Two or three enemies are ſufficient for that purpoſe," he replied; "and, in fact, libels are only proofs of the malice of envy: I can aſſure you, that even in the firſt moments of your ſeparation from lord Clarendon, all the reaſonable part of the world was on your ſide. You know, undoubtedly, what the Queen ſaid publicly the day after your departure."—"I am entirely ignorant of it," ſaid I. "That ſurpriſes me much," he replied, "for it was printed in many of the public

public papers which I read in France: I will relate to you the Queen's own words faithfully, and therefore without reserve. They were speaking of your exile, and the Queen said, 'The story which some persons have circulated on this subject has not common sense; the austere manners and virtue of lord Elby, and lady Clarendon's attachment to her husband, will not allow me to give the least credit to such an imposture.'

I listened with the greatest attention to these flattering speeches; and the earl added to this narration several other circumstances of the same nature, which made all the impression on me he could desire. The night having come on, I was desirous of returning to the house: the earl gave me his arm, and we walked on together. When I found myself alone with a man that lord Clarendon believed to be his rival, in the thickest part of the wood, and in perfect darkness, I felt a sensation of pain which the earl's conversation could not dissipate. I recollected

lected that I had never walked in this wood at ſuch an hour with any man but lord Clarendon; this thought excited ſtrong emotions of tenderneſs and ſorrow in my heart, but as I approached my houſe, I felt another ſort of embarraſſment ſtill more diſtreſſing; I was dreadfully alarmed at the idea of appearing before my ſervants accompanied by the earl. I told him my fears. "It is true," he ſaid, "that the want of light, and the groſs conception of domeſtics demand peculiar precaution at our hands; let us ſeparate, I will go ſeek my horſes, which are at the entrance of the wood, and do you gain the garden, and go quietly into the houſe as if you had not met me, and I will not join you till an hour has elapſed. Charmed with this expedient, I haſtened to quit the earl, and returned to my houſe and apartment without being perceived; but there I reflected on the myſtery of our conduct, and repented that I had acted ſo, conſidering how much it bore the appearance of intrigue.

About

About three quarters of an hour after, the earl was announced. Since my return to the country, even during the time that Mr. Conolly was with me, I had always ſat in a ſmall cloſet next my own apartment; but not being willing to receive the earl with ſo much familiarity, I ordered him to be ſhewn into the drawing-room, and deſired them to lay a cloth in the eating-parlour, into which I had never once ſet my foot ſince my arrival. After giving theſe orders, I went into the drawing-room, where I found the earl ſtanding with his arms acroſs, and walking ſlowly backwards and forwards with an air of chagrin; I myſelf felt my heart beat violently; he came to me, and taking one of my hands, while tears fell from his eyes, he preſſed it in his in the profoundeſt ſilence, and led me to a ſofa, where, ſeating himſelf by my ſide, he ſaid, "I cannot expreſs what I feel on finding myſelf in this room! .... It is now near four years ſince we were together! .... O, what a dreadful change has taken place in that

that time! The future, the terrible future was then in our hands, it depended ſolely on our reaſon, our feelings, and our will,—but now chance and fortune will decide on it according to their caprice!" The earl pronounced theſe words with ſo much emotion, and in ſo ſolemn a tone, that I was as ſtrongly affected as himſelf. After a few minutes he recovered himſelf, but yet I remarked that his mind was leſs at eaſe than it was during the converſation we had lately held together. I felt indebted to him; I attributed his melancholy to pure and affecting motives, which did honour to his heart; the more I examined, the more I diſcovered a ſimilarity in our mode of thinking, and became the more attached to him.

At ten o'clock ſupper was announced; we adjourned to the parlour, where the recollections which had intruded on us in the drawing-room were renewed. For my own part, I was ſtrangely confuſed at finding myſelf *tête-à-tête* with the earl in the preſence of my ſervants. I experienced that invincible uneaſineſs

easiness which delicate minds always feel when they have suffered themselves to be induced to do what they secretly disapprove. The earl, at the commencement of supper, constantly spoke to me in French, on account of the attendants, while I affected to answer in English, in order that they might understand what was said; he easily guessed my motive, and then the conversation was entirely in English, and was confined to indifferent subjects: on rising from table, I dismissed the earl, who retired, and I returned to my apartment. I felt it necessary to be by myself, that I might reflect on what passed within me. I was delighted at the earl's arrival; isolated, abandoned by the whole world, deprived for such a length of time of all conversation, it was highly gratifying to see a faithful friend, who knew my heart, and who appeared to share all my feelings. Nevertheless, I could not shake off a kind of remorse which I experienced, when I reflected that the man who had been said to be my lover, should be alone with

with me under the ſame roof, and that he would paſs ſome days with me. The more I conſidered this, the more did the idea ſtrike and diſtreſs me. Under the pretext of a ſlight indiſpoſition, I made one of my women ſleep in my chamber; I was deſirous of ſurrounding myſelf with witneſſes, while I bluſhed at theſe humiliating precautions, which convinced me, by woeful experience, that the obſervation of a certain decorum is ſo much the more reſpectable, that one cannot deviate from it without being expoſed to degrading ſuſpicions, or at leaſt to the dread of them; and that then one is compelled to have recourſe to artifice, which frequently anſwers no other end than to conceal the diſtreſs of a tormenting conſcience. I ſlept not, and I reſolved to exact a promiſe from the earl that he would not paſs his nights in my houſe. I knew that he had left his carriage and ſervants at a village about ſix miles from my re-

 ſidence,

ſidence, and I determined to requeſt him to ſleep there every night. I did not reflect on the confuſion I ſhould feel on making a propoſal which preſuppoſed ſuch diſgraceful fears; but in the morning, when on the point of meeting him, I perceived that I ſhould never have courage enough to ſpeak to him on the ſubject: beſide the delicacy which prevented me from explaining my thoughts, I was fearful of diſpleaſing him, and of changing the opinion he had formed of the frankneſs and energy of my character. The moſt dangerous means of ſeduction which an artful man can employ with a young female, are the exalting her defects into ſublime virtues, and perſuading her, that he ſees and admires in her the faults which he wiſhes her to poſſeſs, ſuch as temerity, imprudence, and a contempt for the opinion of the world. Notwithſtanding I am too ſuſceptible of enthuſiaſm, I am ſtill naturally of a timid and reſerved diſpoſition;

poſition; but the earl praiſed me on the deciſion of my character to ſuch exceſs, that I was deſirous of keeping up that appearance in his eyes. The foundation of corruption is laid the moment praiſe undeſerved is preſented to one, and when, far from regretting it, one has the weakneſs to liſten to it with pleaſure. It is an invitation to flattery, which is never attended to with impunity, and which has ruined more women than love.

As ſoon as I was dreſſed, I aſked if the earl was riſen, and my aſtoniſhment was exceſſive, when I learned that he had not ſlept in the houſe. Thomſon told me, that the evening before, after having ſtaid a few minutes in the apartment which had been prepared for him, he left it, ſaying, that, wiſhing to write to London, he wanted a paper which he had left in his carriage, and that in conſequence he had taken a guide, who conducted him to the village. I ſuſpected that there was ſome

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myftery in this conduct, and I waited impatiently for the earl, who did not arrive till noon. I immediately afked him why he had not flept in the houfe. "Your curiofity," replied he, "embarraffes me; but fince it is impoffible for me to conceal any thing from you, I muft confefs the truth, even at the rifk of appearing puerile and pufillanimous. Confider," faid he, "that after I quitted you laft night, on a fudden it ftruck me that punctilious decorum required perhaps that I fhould not take up my refidence in your houfe alone with you; I am not naturally of a fearful difpofition, but you have made me a true coward." At thefe words I was fo affected, that, without being able to fpeak, I offered my hand to the earl; who muft have obferved the joy and tendernefs he had excited; but he, feigning not to perceive it, continued: "I am certain, that with the intrepidity which heaven has granted you, you muft think me very weak and extravagant."

This

This laſt expreſſion of the earl's inſpired me with ſo blind a confidence in him, that from that moment I ceaſed to reflect on circumſtances which might wound decorum and injure my reputation; it appeared to me that I ought to entruſt the care of it intirely to a friend ſo attentive, ſo prudent, and whoſe mode of thinking had ſo extraordinary a conformity with my own. Thus it was that this man, profoundly artful, ſeduced my reaſon and ſubdued my heart. Knowing perfectly well my character, which he had ſtudied ſo long, he was convinced that natural inclination would never have attracted me towards him; but he contrived to create and form between us an artificial ſympathy in the place of affection, by divining my thoughts and diſquietudes, by penetrating into my ſcruples, which he affected not to perceive, the better to turn them to his purpoſe, and by confiding them to me as his own ſentiments. The violence of his paſſions had

had corrupted his heart, but his mind, naturally great and generous, ſtill attached him to virtue by its remorſe and keen feelings; he could ſtill comprehend the ſtruggles and emotions ſhe could excite, a ſpecies of penetration which ſuperiority of intellect alone can never ſupply; in ſhort, led aſtray and vitiated, but not totally debaſed, he had renounced, without being able to deſtroy his principles, and he had ſacrificed, but ſtill preſerved them in ſpite of himſelf.

He ſtaid ſix weeks with me, always taking care to ſleep at the village. During the whole of that time the reſt of his conduct correſponded with the idea he had given me of his prudence. I never received him but in the drawing-room, and he deſired me to keep Thomſon, and two or three other ſervants conſtantly in a neighbouring apartment. One of my women almoſt always was employed in embroidering in the very room in which we were;

were; befides he was conftantly attended by a child fix or feven years old, the fon of one of my people, whom the earl, pretending to have a friendfhip for him, brought with him when he made me a vifit, and detained the whole day. In our walks, if we left the garden, he wifhed me always to be followed by a domeftic; in fhort, it was impoffible to carry farther the moft fcrupulous obfervance of decorum. His fociety became every day more agreeable: at the time of our firft acquaintance I had difcovered in him a fuperior mind and great fenfibility, but he was then grave and abfent; he thought not of pleafing me, and was folely employed in efforts to ftudy my character and gain my efteem; I knew not the inexhauftible refources of his judgment and imagination; his converfation was at once folid, interefting, and affecting. His pleafantry was full of juftnefs of thought, and founded on folid reafon. He had

great originality of ideas, and a peculiar manner of varying converſation, by paſſing eaſily and naturally from a frivolous to a ſerious ſubject, from melancholy to gaiety. Never has the ſeductive art of patient liſtening been carried farther; he appeared to forget himſelf entirely; and he ſeemed, to the object whom he wiſhed to pleaſe, to talk ſolely for the purpoſe of aſking for information; and the moſt ingenious things he ſaid looked like a neceſſary reply, which was the more agreeable, as one flattered one's-ſelf with the honour of inſpiring the idea. He often congratulated me on having been able to regain my peace and tranquillity. "At leaſt," ſaid he one day to me, "your misfortunes protect you for ever againſt the moſt imperious of the paſſions; and the more becauſe you have experienced only the pains of love, without ever having taſted its delights, for lord Clarendon was not capable of loving. It would be miſery far

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ſurpaſſing any you can feel, to reject the object which had truly been ſenſible to the force of that ſtrong paſſion. What a dangerous remembrance would ſuch a feeling encourage! What bleſſings in life, what kind of felicity would be capable of affording conſolation for the loſs of ſuch happineſs?"—" But," I replied, " you always talk as if you had never known love, and yet, in ſpite of your auſterity, it is generally imagined that you were ſeriouſly attached to lady L****, and lord Clarendon believed that you were paſſionately in love." — " Paſſionately in love!" exclaimed the earl, " and is it lady Clarendon who profanes ſuch an expreſſion, by uſing it ſo lightly? No, madam, I have never been paſſionately in love! I knew my own heart, and at the the ſame time wiſhed to perform thoſe duties which are impoſed on every man who has the advantage or misfortune to be born in civilized ſociety; and if I had

 loved

loved vehemently, I ſhould ill have paid that ſacred debt, for I ſhould have been the worſt ſubject in the three kingdoms." —"Why ſo," ſaid I, "if you had ſelected a proper object?"—"I entreat you to believe," he anſwered, "that I could not have attached myſelf to a vicious or narrow-minded perſon, ſo that I ſhould have made an excellent choice. But tell me, I pray, madam, whether you, who have loved with ardour, were not very unhappy when lord Clarendon quitted you ſo often to go to paſs four or five hours in the Houſe of Lords, or when he went to any political club to diſcuſs the intereſts of the nation for whole days together? Well then, if he had loved as he was beloved, he would have abandoned buſineſs, politics, ſociety, and the univerſe itſelf; he would ſtill have been here and at your knees, forgetting, without a pang, what is termed glory, which is at the beſt but a ſubſtitute for happineſs. But to prove to you the

the effect which love would have produced on me, I will tell you merely that I had a mother, whom I loſt at the age of ſixteen; her affection for me was incomparable, and I loved her to idolatry. I have felt a thouſand times that I never could have ſupported her anxiety and agonies during the war, and that if ſhe had lived, I ſhould undoubtedly have quitted the ſervice. This is the reaſon, madam, why I never have been, and never ſhall be a paſſionate lover."

It was by means of diſcourſes ſimilar to this, that lord Elby, with an addreſs, the depth and ſkilfulneſs of which I cannot delineate, contrived to inſinuate himſelf into my heart, and to give birth, if not to the paſſion he painted ſo well, at leaſt to an unbounded confidence, the moſt lively and tender intereſt, and an eſteem bordering on admiration. In general, all my paſſions, with the exception of that of hatred, of which my heart is not ſuſceptible,

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are in the extreme; I can neither despise, nor esteem with moderation, nor pardon by halves. Those faults and injuries which do not excite in me the most violent indignation, always obtain from me an entire forgiveness; in short, I am not capable of feeling moderate emotions, I either love not at all, or I love with enthusiasm. This is at least what I was at that time: I hope that experience, my misfortunes, and my errors, have reformed the defects of such a character.

The earl, who partook of all my opinions, demonstrated strong religious sentiments, although, as a Protestant, he sometimes gently ridiculed what he called my superstition, but he always said that that sort of devotion was adapted to the female character: "fear and timidity," he observed, "are in them endearing qualities; candour and simplicity their greatest ornaments; thus I love to observe in them a

piety

piety credulous, minute, and timorous, but especially when they have intellect: it is for this reason that I have always been of opinion, that the catholic religion of all the sects of christianity is best calculated for them; the women must have been the inventors of the veneration paid to relics, from the same feeling which induces them to value so much a cypher, a riband, or a lock of hair, presented to them by a favoured lover."

The earl's conduct agreed perfectly with his language; he prevailed on me to read Sherlock's Works, and lent me *Les pensées de Pascal*, which, as he said, he always carried about him.

The earl added to these artifices a patience extremely rare in persons of so lively an imagination and such strong passions. He never was imprudently eager to claim approbation, he knew how to wait for a proper opportunity, and to take advantage of it with inimitable art. For example, though

though he manifested extreme confidence in me, I remarked that he failed in one point, for he never mentioned his wife. More than one reason made me desirous of interrogating him on the subject, and one evening I told him that I had a question to put to him which I feared would appear indiscrete. "That is impossible," he replied, "has not friendship a title to ask and to know every thing?"—"Well," replied I, "I am so desirous of admiring you on all points, that I wish you would explain to me the motives of your conduct to lady Elby." At these words he assumed an embarrassed air, hung down his head and was silent. "You know," continued I, "that I have no reason to love her, but resentment does not make me unjust. Lady Elby has understanding and a pleasing person; her conduct is irreproachable; she adores you; and yet it appears to me you are not as much attached to her as you ought to be."—"I tell

tell you without hefitation," faid the earl, "that her pleafing perfon has no charms for me. As to her underftanding, it refembles her difpofition, which is malicious and artful. With regard to her affection, I believe that fhe once loved me, but fhe is one of thofe women who, being cured of love, retains no fort of regard for the object of her attachment; and you will allow, that fuch a paffion is not very interefting. As to her reputation, if it is irreproachable, I dare venture to affure you it is becaufe I have always been very averfe from ufelefs reproaches."—" How much you aftonifh me," exclaimed I, "what is lady Elby"——" I fhould have defired," interrupted he, " not to have entered on this fubject, though it will tell to my advantage, but you fhall never afk me in vain; thus I determine to reveal a fecret with which I would entruft you alone. Liften then to an extraordinary tale which I will tell in a few words. I married

married lady Elizabeth without being in love, and ſolely becauſe ſhe was lord Clarendon's ſiſter. She diſplayed a great affection for me, but alſo a ridiculous and importunate jealouſy; I ſaw very few attractions in her, but I long gave her credit for virtues ſhe does not poſſeſs, which made me excuſe her intolerance and rancour againſt every woman whoſe conduct was not perfectly ſtrict. In ſhort, I had an eſteem for her, and to make her happy appeared to me a ſacred duty which I performed without pain. Such was my ſituation four years ſince, when we quitted this houſe and returned to London. You know that the counteſs ſet out ſome days before you to go to Bath to attend her mother who was dying. Buſineſs preventing me from accompanying her, I ſuffered her to go alone, and went myſelf to London. On the very day of my arrival I received an expreſs from lord Selden, who was in Devonſhire on the point of marriage; he informed

informed me that he had received a letter from London, containing the intelligence that Sir Thomas Barleton had had an apoplectic fit; Selden added, that he had reason to believe that the baronet had made a will in his favour, and that not being able to leave Devonshire, he should be obliged to me to watch over his interests, and he sent me an authority to act for him in due form. I immediately went to see the baronet, who was still alive but knew nobody; he died the next day. His will was opened, and in fact he had appointed Selden sole legatee. By virtue of my authority, I did every thing which Selden would have done for himself. You should know, madam, that Barleton, who was fifty years of age only at his death, had been very successful with the ladies, and that his good fortune continued to the end of his life. I thought it would be proper to burn all the letters of gallantry which he might have preserved; I communicated

municated this idea to his valet, who opened his ſcrutoire, where I found an enormous packet of letters and notes of various hand-writings, thrown together without order, and mixed with miniature pictures, the features of moſt of which were familiar to me. I collected all theſe rival beauties together, and threw them with their letters into the fire. I thought I had completed my ſearch, but the valet told me that there was ſtill a ſecret drawer at the bottom of the ſcrutoire; I opened it and found another packet of letters open and arranged in great order, the writing of which I knew to be lady Elby's; this did not aſtoniſh me, as ſhe had been acquainted with the baronet from her infancy, and I knew that ſhe occaſionally correſponded with him. I took theſe letters and put them into my pocket, telling the valet that they belonged to my wife. In the evening, on my return home, I threw the letters on a table, not feeling the ſmalleſt curioſity

curiofity to read them; they were arranged in the order of their dates, fo that the one on which I had mechanically caft my eyes as I took out the packet appeared to be written fome months before, and contained nothing material; but as I threw them carelefsly on the table, I deranged their order and let part of them fall on the ground. I picked them up, and by chance my eyes were fixed on two or three lines which appeared extraordinary; I then examined the letters, and difcovered, beyond the poffibility of doubt, that the baronet had feduced the countefs before her marriage."—Here I could not reftrain myfelf from interrupting the earl to exprefs my extreme furprife.—"This is not all," continued the earl, "in one of the letters written about a month before her marriage, the countefs in defpair informs her old lover without difguife, or any myfterious or delicate circumlocution, that her fears were but too well

well founded, for ſhe had been pregnant two months at leaſt. This letter, the only one I have preſerved, contains many reproaches, and demands his advice; the baronet no doubt adviſed her to pretend to have a violent fall before the eighth month. In fact, one day the counteſs was found lying at the bottom of the ſtairs weeping and proteſting that ſhe had fallen down ten ſteps: ſhe lay-in ſix days after, which on account of the accident ſurpriſed nobody, and chance ſo ordered it, that the child of which ſhe was delivered was ſo ſmall and feeble, that it was eaſily miſtaken for one born before its time. But it lived, and is now near eight years old and in very good health; and though he is not my child, he will inherit a large fortune and all the honours of my family; and even if my two boys had lived, I ſhould have ſeen this ſtranger to my blood deprive my own children of their rights. This diſcovery ſurpriſed me extremely, but I had

already loſt my two ſons, and I reſolved not to have any more, and very eaſily adopted proper meaſures for the purpoſe. I thought, that at all events it was proper that lord Clarendon ſhould not be kept in ignorance of the circumſtance; I therefore carried the letters to him and informed him of every thing. He loves his ſiſter extremely, and was very much affected; I conſoled him by the aſſurance that I was by no means tempted to make a ridiculous noiſe, or any uſeleſs reproaches on the ſubject. I gave him my word that I would never mention it to his ſiſter, and he promiſed to obſerve the ſame ſilence, as he was ſure ſhe would expire with grief if ſhe ſhould ſuſpect I had the ſlighteſt knowledge of the adventure. Lord Clarendon would have been very happy if I had burned all the letters, but I poſitively aſſured him that I would always preſerve that in which the counteſs declared her pregnancy. I have no objection, I ſaid, to forgive and

be ſilent, but I will preſerve the proofs of my generoſity. Notwithſtanding this refuſal, lord Clarendon expreſſed the higheſt gratitude; but from that moment I remarked a great alteration in his ſentiments towards me; he thought it neceſſary to be more cautious with me; he feared me ,and loved me leſs. As to the counteſs, ſhe has never had the ſmalleſt notion of this diſcovery. She was perſuaded that Barleton had burned all her love-letters, becauſe ſhe always finiſhed them by deſiring him to burn them immediately. She was not aware that men of ſucceſsful intrigue do not ſo readily deprive themſelves of the monuments of their victories. For my own part, I ſhould eaſily have excuſed a fault committed before I had the right of complaining, if lady Elby had been gentle, humble, and above all indulgent. I have always thought that a young female is degraded when ſhe ceaſes to look on her ſeducer with any thing but perfect indifference

ference: ſhe ought either to love or hate him; if ſhe ſees him without pain, ſhe has loſt at once that ſentiment which ennobles weakneſs and that contrition which expiates guilt. I recollected with indignation the prudery and intrepid audacity of this woman, who was ſhameleſs enough to receive her ſeducer coldly at her houſe; I figured her to myſelf tranquilly beholding him careſſing his ſon. I remembered a thouſand odious falſehoods uttered without any neceſſity; as for inſtance, the folly of inceſſantly repeating that her ſon reſembled me; you have heard her ſay a thouſand times that he had my eyes and my ſmile. She fails not alſo to remark how aſtoniſhing it is that a child born before its time ſhould be ſo big and ſo ſtout. I really believe that ſhe has totally forgotten what paſſed between her and Barleton, and that ſhe is like thoſe perſons who, beginning with hypocriſy, at length perſuade themſelves they are devout. At leaſt

leaſt it is certain that ſhe imagines ſhe has compenſated for her fault by the preference ſhe has given to a huſband of twenty-ſix, over a lover of forty-ſeven, for that was the baronet's age when ſhe married." This narrative completed my admiration of the earl; he brought me next day the papers which proved the exact truth of all that he had told me; they conſiſted of many notes from lord Clarendon, and the letter in which lady Elby imparted to her ſeducer the criminal ſecret. The earl was affected when he obſerved how much I admired his conduct. "I have done what I ought," ſaid he; "if I could have driven from my family the offspring of guilt, this uſurper who fraudulently invaded the property of my own relations, probity would then have preſcribed to me a recourſe to the public tribunals; but though I was in poſſeſſion of proofs ſufficient to have diſhonoured for ever the ſiſter of my friend, who alſo bore my name,

I had

I had not enough to have ſucceeded in a court of law. The counteſs's letter is not ſigned; and beſides, the law would at all events have legitimated a child born ſeven months and a half after marriage. I have kept ſilence, and have contented myſelf with deſpiſing a woman, devoid of principle and delicacy; if, notwithſtanding her fall, ſhe had been an intereſting woman, I ſhould have kept the ſecret to myſelf and would have gladly adopted her child. As it is," he added, "this culpable and vicious woman enjoys the higheſt reputation, and is cited as a model of virtue, while lady Clarendon is calumniated. What then is the value of public opinion?"

The earl propoſed, on the very day on which this converſation took place, an excurſion on the water; to which I agreed. We went on the river about noon; my ſervants were in a ſeparate veſſel, which followed our boat. In the evening as we deſcended the river on our return to my

houſe, I inſenſibly fell into the reverie which the cloſe of a beautiful day, and particularly the motion of the water and the meaſured ſound of the oars, naturally inſpires. I recollected that I had often made ſuch an excurſion with lord Clarendon. Turning my eyes towards one of the banks, I regarded the borders of the river, as we paſſed, with a melancholy feeling; in ſpite of the darkneſs, I noticed with ſighs the well-known trees and huts, nay, even clumps of ſhrubs; then fugitive objects rapidly ſucceeded each other, and were loſt in obſcurity. This contemplation preſented an image of my fate; in fact, toſſed by the waves, I had no longer any thing before me but confuſed projects, vague hopes, and uncertain deſires: ſometimes faint recollection brought happineſs to my view; but I could not foreſee the future, and I dreaded leſs to find it impenetrable than to remove the myſterious veil which enveloped it. The earl examined me

me in ſilence, and at the end of a quarter of an hour, as if replying to my thoughts, he ſaid, "Yes, it was on thoſe banks, under this ſky ......a veſſel following us...."—"There wants only," ſaid I, "the ruſtic muſic which we always had in the boat behind us." I had no ſooner ſpoken theſe words, than I heard the ſounds of horns and flutes. This was a ſurpriſe which Thomſon had prepared for me, and which was the cauſe of indeſcribable emotion; I cannot delineate what I felt on recollecting all the ſame airs which I had formerly liſtened to with ſuch different ſentiments! "Unfortunate woman," exclaimed the earl in a broken voice, as he ſeized one of my hands, "I feel all that paſſes in your breaſt." As he ſpoke theſe words, he preſſed my trembling hand to his heart, the violent palpitation of which deprived him of ſpeech. The night now cloſed in, and the heavens being ſuddenly enveloped with heavy

 clouds,

clouds, we were plunged into profound darkneſs. It would be impoſſible to deſcribe what I experienced at that moment. The earl appeared ſo completely to enter into all my thoughts, and had become ſo dear to me, that I am not certain whether the inconceivable anguiſh I felt proceeded from his or my recollections. After a pauſe of a few minutes, he preſſed my hand to his lips, and I felt his tears drop on it! at that inſtant the veſſels came to ſhore and we landed. As ſoon as we had reached the parlour and lights had been brought in, I regarded the earl, without knowing the cauſe, with more than common intereſt, and yet with a timid embarraſſment I did not comprehend. Supper was ſerved up, and while we were at table, the moſt violent thunder-ſtorm, accompanied with hail, came on that I ever remember to have witneſſed. I was weak enough to be alarmed at the thunder, but my greateſt diſtreſs aroſe from the idea of

what

what the earl had to encounter in a journey of ſix miles on horſeback during ſuch dreadful weather. I propoſed that he ſhould paſs the night in my houſe, which he poſitively refuſed. He conſented merely to ſtay a little longer; after ſupper the ſtorm ſeemed to abate and the thunder ceaſed, upon which the earl took his leave at a quarter after ten. Half an hour after his departure, the ſtorm grew more violent than ever; I ſuppoſed that the earl might have reached the middle of a very thick wood which lay in his road; I opened my window and obſerved that the clouds and the tempeſt were preciſely impending over that very ſpot. Immediately a dreadful thunder clap alarmed me ſo much, that darting to the other end of the chamber, I threw myſelf on a couch and almoſt fainted away. I rang my bell, and Thomſon came to me; ſhe, knowing my fears, requeſted me to ſubdue my alarm, as the ſtorm would probably ſoon ceaſe,

 having

having ſpent all its force, ſince the cloud covered the wood and burſt immediately over it. At theſe words I made a motion to her to leave the room, and burſt into tears. The dreadful anxiety I ſuffered on the earl's account, prevented me from thinking of going to reſt.

I waited impatiently for daylight, that I might ſend to the village, when about one o'clock I heard a horſe gallopping acroſs the court-yard; not knowing what to think of this, but almoſt deprived of ſenſe, I haſtened down ſtairs; it was one of the earl's ſervants, who had hurried to me to let me know his maſter had got home without any accident, though a thunder-bolt had fallen about twenty yards from him; and he had ſent to know how I was, as he was perfectly acquainted with my terror. The ſervant brought me a note written in French, containing the following words:

'I fear that the ſtorm has made you ill, 'and I cannot go to bed in the diſquietude 'of

'of uncertainty. For my part I rode 'through the wood very peaceably by the 'light of lightning. I knew that my 'guardian angel was certainly on the 'watch, and that during the tempeſt ſhe 'would condeſcend to think of me. I 'repreſented to myſelf lady Clarendon on 'her knees, praying to the Almighty, 'holding in her hands the image of the 'Virgin, that was one day diſcovered in her 'ſcrutoire; and this pleaſing image entirely 'occupied my mind.

'I imagine, madam, that you will have 'retired to reſt long before James can 'arrive at your houſe, ſince, at the inſtant 'of my writing this, the ſtorm has ceaſed 'near an hour; but James will inquire of 'Thomſon, and will bring me intelligence 'of you; he will leave this note which 'you will receive when you awake, and 'which will inform you that your moſt 'tender and faithful friend lives ſtill to 'love and admire you, and that he will

'make you a viſit early in the morning,
'to inquire in perſon, if the agitation of
'to-day has diſturbed your repoſe.'

For the firſt time in my life I felt embarraſſed how to anſwer. I thought that ſince his lordſhip ſuppoſed that I was in bed, he would think it extraordinary that I was not; I imagined I might make this circumſtance appear perfectly natural, by ſaying, that the ſtorm had given me a very violent head-ache; but, not daring to expreſs the anxiety I had felt, I did not mention it at all. My note was ſhort, cold, and perplexed, and yet I was near an hour in compoſing it; but the man to whom it was addreſſed, was too enlightened and too much an adept in artifice to be diſcontented with it; and without doubt the ſort of diſſimulation which he diſcovered in it, tended only to ſtrengthen his criminal hopes. I felt a kind of alarm at the thoughts of ſeeing him again, which his preſence ſoon diſſipated. The ſimplicity

of his manners and behaviour reſtored me to my original ſecurity; and repenting that I had not informed him of my anxiety, I was guilty of the double imprudence of ſpeaking of it both circumſtantially and frankly: he liſtened to me attentively, but without exhibiting the ſmalleſt emotion; he affected during the whole of the day to talk of nothing but his journey to Italy, ſaying that he ſhould go to London for a fortnight, and then ſhould ſet out without further delay. When I aſked how long he propoſed to ſtay in Italy, he informed me he ſhould reſide there at leaſt three years. I did not conceal from him that this deſign afflicted me; but on this head he always anſwered with brevity and a certain dryneſs of expreſſion which aſtoniſhed and alarmed me. He, however, aſſured me, that he would write punctually to me, and that he would ſend me ſome Cameos and copies from the beſt works of the ancient artiſts. "*A-propos* of painting," added

added he, "I ſhould be happy if you would preſent me with a picture drawn on purpoſe for me to take with me; this gift of friendſhip would be highly gratifying to me. I do not aſk for your portrait, for notwithſtanding the purity of the ſentiment which induces me to deſire it, as it would be neceſſary to conceal it from every eye, I ſhould be the moſt wretched of men if I poſſeſſed it; I ſhould always be in dread that it would be diſcovered, and no treaſure could ever be the cauſe of ſo much trouble and anxiety; but I requeſt you to ſketch a figure of your air and ſhape, and whoſe features may be ſo managed as not to betray you; I can picture to myſelf your countenance much better than you can paint it, notwithſtanding your great talents." This thought appeared to me ingenious and agreeable; the idea of refuſal never even entered my imagination, and I promiſed to make the drawing. A few days after, the earl ſet out for London, aſſuring

aſſuring me he would return in a fortnight. His departure was the cauſe of inexpreſſible depreſſion of ſpirits. I felt relief in the performance of my promiſe; I painted my figure and ſhape, and choſe that moment which was the moſt affecting of my life, and which gave riſe to the blackeſt calumnies: I mean that in which I went to ſearch for the paintings in water colours by Ophelia, that I might copy them. I drew myſelf ſtanding with my face averted and ſhaded by locks of hair, holding a dark-lantern in one hand and a key in the other. I worked inceſſantly at the picture which I finiſhed in leſs than eight days. The earl wrote to me regularly, but his letters were not ſo tender as before the renewal of his viſits; there was a dry and melancholy expreſſion in them which ſtruck me forcibly. One of them concluded thus: 'They ſay very 'generally in London that lord B*** 'is enamoured of you, and that his paſ-

'sion detains him at his seat, which is 'but eighteen miles from you, and that 'for these four months past he has spent 'his time in your house. The inference I 'would draw is this: that we should not be 'silly enough to suffer the world to have 'the least weight in the motives of our 'actions. We must love virtue for her-'self; she is in fact so beautiful and so 'amiable, that she well deserves disin-'terested worship.' Some days after, I read in the public papers an article of intelligence which distressed me much. The following is a faithful transcript:

'The earl of Elby has sold all his 'estates, and has purchased those of the 'prince of C . . . in Italy, situate in the 'kingdom of Naples. It is said that the 'amiable and virtuous lady Elby remains 'in England, but if she were at liberty 'to act according to her own inclinations, 'she would not hesitate to be a party in 'this extraordinary expatriation.' This paragraph

paragraph excited various reflections, for I had no doubt of its being ſtrictly conformable to truth; I recollected, indeed, that the earl, without openly declaring his intention, frequently ſpoke of Italy as if he thought of reſiding there, and that he had begun to talk in this manner about a fortnight before he left me. But why had he formed this deſign ſo lately; and why make a myſtery of it to me? It was not difficult to explain the reaſon of ſuch conduct, or rather the moſt dextrous artifices led me to believe every thing that it was wiſhed I ſhould. I thought that the earl, having paſſed ſix weeks with me in an intimacy of the tendereſt confidence, finding me radically cured of an unhappy paſſion, and entirely abandoned and forgotten by lord Clarendon, had conceived for me ſentiments of a nature to alarm the ſeverity of his virtue. This ſuppoſition ſeemed to explain his apparent coldneſs, his deſign of quitting his country, and his deſire

desire to conceal it from me, the better to spare himself the embarrassment and danger of answering my questions. I enthusiastically admired his conduct; I said to myself a thousand times that lord Elby was a man of the greatest virtue and feeling in existence; that he had an incomparable heart; and that he only in the world could afford an idea of perfection. I, however, thought seriously on the mode of conduct I ought to adopt; I could not have acted more properly than to respect the motives of his reserve, to appear ignorant of what he wished to conceal, and to let him put into execution a design he judged necessary, and which in fact would perfectly secure him from the danger he apprehended. If I had adopted this resolution, I should have escaped the snares that were laid for me; I should have become his dupe without the possibility of becoming his victim; but my mind was too much heated to permit me to conduct myself

myſelf in the moſt reaſonable manner. I thought it would be dreadful to ſuffer ſo faithful a friend to baniſh himſelf on my account, and at thirty-four years of age to renounce his country, his friends, and the political career which he had begun with ſo much credit, to go and live in obſcurity in a foreign land. In ſhort, that if he had abſolutely reſolved to quit the country in which I lived, it was my part to go into exile who had no remaining tie to detain me; that I would go and eſtabliſh myſelf in France, happy if by baniſhing myſelf I could ſecure his repoſe and reſtore him to his country.

Lord Elby returned at the end of a fortnight, as he had intended; he exhibited great emotion and affection at the firſt ſight of me; but after that moment he affected a ſort of reſerve and gravity, which ſtruck me ſo much, that I never dared to aſk a ſingle queſtion on the ſubject of his journey. He told me, however, that

that if I would permit, he would ſtay twelve days with me; he even mentioned a Monday as the day of his departure. As ſoon as he had come to this ſlight explanation, he haſtily changed the topic of converſation. I gave him the picture I had painted for him; as he examined the ſubject of it, I obſerved a ſlight alteration in his countenance. He put in on a table and ſeemed loſt in thought. After a quarter of an hour had elapſed, taking up the picture again, he fixed his eyes on it and ſaid, "Yes, this picture ſhall be very dear to me." As ſoon as he had uttered theſe words, he put it into his pocket and ſpoke of it no more. The following days I ſeveral times attempted to direct the converſation towards his intended journey; but he always gave ſuch ſhort anſwers, and ſeemed to diſlike the ſubject ſo much, that I was compelled to deſiſt, the more ſo becauſe he never failed haſtily to change the topic. Beſides, though he

affected

affected to be very abſent and melancholy, his imagination ſupplied him with inexhauſtible means of pleaſing in this new character. His abſence of mind had ſomething very intereſting in it, for he always appeared deſirous of concealing it. His converſation, though more laconic and leſs tender and affectionate than ordinary, was more forcible and animated; it was filled with happy ſallies of fancy, which a ſlight tincture of ſarcaſm and humour rendered as poignant as they were original. In ſhort, every thing tended to convince me that he was a man equally virtuous and impaſſioned, fearing to betray himſelf, and combating his inclinations with all the arms which reaſon and prudence could furniſh; and I reſolved, in my turn, to ſuffer him to complete his deſign without demanding an explanation from him. On the day before his departure he came to me at an early hour, and I found his external appearance much altered; he had a diſturbed but affectionate

fectionate air; even his voice had a different expreſſion. He ſaid little during the courſe of the day, ſpeaking only a few affecting words which touched my heart. About ſix in the evening his ſervant James entered the parlour, and aſked for what time of the morning he ſhould order poſt-horſes. The earl, pretending to be violently angry, replied, that he had already told him he ſhould ſet out at break of day. James left the room, and the earl, covering his face with his hands, burſt into tears. The cautious prudence with which he had conducted himſelf for twelve days, afforded me no reaſon to apprehend ſuch a ſcene; it had therefore all the effect on me he could expect. My tears alſo flowed.... The earl then appearing to recollect himſelf, ſaid, "Pardon me, madam, this inſtance of weakneſs, and think at leaſt that it is natural to be afflicted on leaving our friends for ſo long a time."—"Yes," replied I, "it is for a long time indeed."

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At these words the earl fixed his eyes on me with an air of astonishment. At that moment I forgot my last determination, and had the imprudence to say, " Yes, I know that you are about to desert me for ever." —" Desert you," exclaimed he, " great God, I only sacrifice myself for you. But who has revealed this afflicting secret to you? I then frankly related to him what he knew as well as I; I told him what I had read in the newspaper: he seemed surprised and grieved. " I can," he said, " be silent, but I cannot deceive you. It is true that in a few hours I shall quit you for ever. Confused reflections, and a secret instinct, have prompted this afflicting plan, which will completely demonstrate the absurdity of the calumnies invented against you."—" Is it possible," cried I, " to escape the shafts of malevolence. Recollect what you yourself informed me concerning lord B***, whose visits I constantly

conſtantly refuſed, and who, ſince my return, has never once entered my doors. But," I continued, " my intention is not to aſk your reaſons for this ſcheme of eternal abſence, nor even to combat them. I am ſure that your motives, the dictates of virtue, are reſpectable, and I ſubſcribe to them. Let us ſeparate for ever, I conſent; but ſuffer me to make the whole ſacrifice; permit me to forſake a country where I am uſeleſs and deſerted: remain you here to ſerve it, and conſign me to obſcurity; it is the fate which belongs to me. At theſe words, the earl ſaid every thing which the moſt lively gratitude could inſpire, at the ſame time repeating that his reſolution was not to be ſhaken. " But," ſaid he, " why do you determine not to aſk my reaſons?" This queſtion embarraſſed me, and I made no reply. The earl, continuing the diſcourſe, ſaid, " If you think that I have reaſon to be alarmed at opening my whole ſoul to you, you muſt

muſt have leſs eſteem for me, and that would be the height of miſery; no," continued he, without giving me time to anſwer, " I have nothing to conceal, I love you, it is true, as man never loved before; previous to the renewal of our intimacy, I felt only a lively intereſt in your fate, and a tender compaſſion for your ſorrows; your letters fortified that attachment, but when I had an opportunity of ſeeing you, and that continually, I was delighted with your virtue, free from prudery, devoid of oſtentation and prejudice; ſuch, in ſhort, as till then my imagination alone had repreſented to me: I acknowledged with tranſport the idol of my heart. I exclaimed, O, thou whoſe noble ſentiments elevated my underſtanding, enlightened my mind, and whom I have regarded as the end and recompence of my actions, ought I to fear thee under that angelic form? Is not the enthuſiaſm itſelf which I feel the guarantee of thy power and

and my fidelity. I know that in the present corruption of manners, the term passion appears not to be suitable to friendship, yet, before I knew you, this sublime sentiment was a passion in me, and must I no longer give it that name because you are the object? In short, I call to witness every thing sacred to generous and feeling minds, that in all the dreams of an imagination entirely filled with the idea of you, I have formed only a single wish; and that is, that you were my sister, that I might have the happy right of consecrating my life to you." I listened to this seductive discourse with the stupid admiration of credulous simplicity. The earl at length added, "That he had wished to conceal from me the whole extent of so disinterested a sentiment, and that he did not even desire that I should participate it; but that the value he set on my esteem forced him at last to speak without disguise; and the rather, as such language might be permitted

mitted at a moment when he was leaving me for ever. As to his baniſhment from his country, he aſſured me he had by no means determined on it through fear of any danger he might incur by remaining near me, that a notion ſo injurious to our characters had never preſented itſelf to his mind; but he had felt it was impoſſible for him to live in England without ſeeing me, and manifeſting to all the world his excluſive and paſſionate attachment to me; and that at the ſame time he could not be ignorant, that ſuch conduct would renew the moſt unjuſt calumnies, and would for ever be injurious to my reputation; and that, moreover, he had other very powerful reaſons, too long to repeat, which compelled him to baniſh himſelf for ever." As ſoon as he had finiſhed this explanation, the ſervant came to inform us ſupper was ready. We ſat down to table in great affliction; I was much affected at thinking, that in a few moments I ſhould

I ſhould bid him an eternal adieu. He neither ate nor ſpoke, but was abſorbed in thought. When he roſe from table, I propoſed that he ſhould go to the drawing-room for half an hour; contrary to his cuſtom, he followed me without reply, and when we were alone, he ſaid, "I have yet a thouſand things of importance to communicate to you, and I have been thinking during ſupper, that it is abſolutely neceſſary that you ſhould grant me a ſecret interview this evening. I have ſome advice to offer you, and to aſk in return; and moreover, we have not yet arranged the mode of our correſpondence. All this may be ſettled in an hour and a half, if we are ſecure from interruption, and I have diſcovered a plan for that purpoſe. I will take my leave of you, as if I were returning to the village, inſtead of which I will remain in the wood, and will return in an hour through the grove of hazel-trees which lies cloſe to your garden; you

you muſt either open the gate or truſt me with the key, and then we may hold our laſt conference, in which I ſhall conclude the explanation of my motives, and, as I deſire, make you acquainted with the pure ſentiments of my heart." I had formed ſuch a notion of the earl's virtue, my admiration was ſo blind, and my prejudice in his favour ſo ſtrong, that this extraordinary propoſition did not give me the leaſt alarm; but it aſtoniſhed me, and I frankly replied, that this converſation might inſtantly take place in the drawing-room, without all this myſtery; that my ſervants would not notice any particularity in his remaining with me longer than uſual on the evening before his departure.—" What then," he exclaimed, in a tone of earneſtneſs, " are you afraid to give me a genuine proof of eſteem and confidence at the inſtant of an eternal ſeparation; will you refuſe to do any more for a friend who has ſacrificed every thing for you,

than you would do for a ſtranger?"—"My confidence in you," I replied, "is unbounded; but, in truth, I ſee no neceſſity for what you propoſe."—"Recollect," ſaid he, "that your ſervants, and eſpecially the females, accuſtomed to enter the room on a thouſand pretexts, without ever being ordered to withdraw, will interrupt us every moment; we ſhall be obliged to ſpeak French, that we may not run the riſk of being underſtood; you talk that language as well as your own; but I am not ſo familiar with it, and it is painful and diſtreſſing to me not to be able to expreſs myſelf in our laſt converſation without difficulty and embarraſſment."—"But what will your ſervants think of your returning ſo late?"—"I will ſay, that in attempting to find a ſhorter path, I loſt myſelf. . . . . In ſhort, time flies, decide, will you refuſe me?" Thus preſſed, and not knowing what to oppoſe to his reaſoning, and wanting both preſence

ſence of mind and courage, I ſaid, "Well then, grant me two days more, depart not till Thurſday; and I will receive you on Wedneſday as you deſire." This propoſal did not pleaſe him; he combated it ſtrongly, by pretending he could not delay his departure; but finding that I would grant no more, he at laſt yielded. He not only made me promiſe to receive him the following Wedneſday at eleven o'clock in the garden, but he inſiſted upon having the key of the outer gate put into his poſſeſſion immediately. I went to look for it, and brought it him; he put it in his pocket, and immediately retired. After he left me I remained for ſome time immovable, not daring to reflect on what had paſſed; at length I exclaimed, "What, have I juſt conſented to a ſecret rendezvous with a man whom I believe to be in love with me? I have promiſed to receive him at night, in a retired ſpot, at a diſtance from all the inhabitants of my houſe; ſhould I

not be juſtly diſgraced if this ſtep were known? How is it that I have been capable of making ſuch an engagement, and how dared he propoſe it? I have no doubt of the purity of his ſentiments; I know that he will uſe only expreſſions of fraternal tenderneſs, and that his heart is ſo virtuous that he condemns himſelf for the inclination he feels, and really thinks that his ſentiments are only thoſe of friendſhip towards me; but can I not diſcover the ſymptoms of love in the picture he draws of his feelings? He loves me as I have loved! . . . : I ſee my own heart as I read his. In ſhort, ſuppoſing love were out of the queſtion, is not this ſtep at once imprudent and criminal? No, I will retract; I will convince him that I cannot perform a promiſe which duty forbids."

Theſe reflections only ſerved to render the weakneſs which prevented me from putting in execution ſo juſt a reſolution the

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more inexcuſable. The earl had obtained a perfect aſcendant over me. I was reſtrained by extreme fear, leſt he ſhould be hurt and diſtreſſed, and eſpecially leſt I ſhould appear to him trifling and capricious. If he had exhibited the leaſt diſquietude on the ſubject of the engagement I had entered into, I ſhould, without heſitation, have had the courage to renounce it; but when he called the next day, he fettered my will, by ſhewing a perfect ſerenity, and an entire confidence in what he termed the invariability of my character, and my regard for my word. How much does vanity deceive by miſleading us! It cauſed me to be wanting to my principles, and at the ſame time rendered me the dupe and the tool of the moſt artful of mankind! I was abſent and thoughtful the whole day; and the earl, in ſpite of the charms of his converſation, could not diſſipate my internal chagrin and diſcontent, which made me conduct myſelf with

 a reſerve

a reſerve bordering on ſullenneſs towards him. About five in the evening he propoſed a walk in the wood; as we were going out, Thomſon haſtened to tell us, that a peaſant belonging to the village in which the earl reſided, had been ſent by his domeſtics to inform him that his houſe was on fire; that the flames raged with great violence; and that James, and the other ſervants of the earl remained in the houſe with a view of attempting to ſave his effects. At this news lord Elby looked pale, and turning towards me, ſaid, "Excuſe me, I muſt leave you without delay, as I have papers of importance in the houſe." As ſoon as he had ſpoken thus, he haſtily quitted me, went down into the court-yard, and not having his own horſes, he borrowed the peaſant's, and immediately departed. Half an hour after his departure, Thomſon came to tell me of the arrival of James, who had not met the earl, as he had gone a different road; I ordered

ordered him to be admitted, and as I caſt my eyes on him, I was alarmed at his appearance; his hair was entirely burnt, his cloaths torn and covered with mud, and his legs could ſcarcely ſupport him. He told me that his horſe had ſtumbled with him in croſſing the wood, and had fallen on his leg, and bruiſed it; but at leaſt," continued he, "I have ſaved and brought hither what my maſter values moſt, a caſket, which he never leaves behind him. While his valet and coachman were carrying out his trunks, I recollected this caſket which they had left behind; the apartment was in flames; not regarding that, I forced into the room, and ſeized the caſket, which lay near an open window; and thinking that it would encumber me too much in deſcending the ſtaircaſe, which the flames had juſt begun to attack, I threw it out of the window, made but one leap down the ſtairs, and took up out of the ſtreet the caſket, which was ſomewhat bruiſed in the fall;

fall; I then ran to the ſtable for my horſe, and came here to ſet the earl at eaſe, who I am ſure is only gone to the village in ſearch of this caſket, and will be much pleaſed when told it is here. Here it is my lady," continued James, opening the flap of his great coat, in which it was wrapped. "Go to bed, and reſt if you can till to-morrow, my poor fellow," ſaid I; "I will inform your maſter of the zeal and courage you have diſplayed on this occaſion." After theſe words, James placed the caſket on the table, and left the room. I examined it, and found ſeveral chinks in it, but did not conceive it was ſo much broken as it really was. As it was in my way while on the table, I wiſhed to remove it to the ſideboard; I roſe, and taking hold of it by a braſs handle on its top, the lid came off, in my hand, ſo that the inſide was completely laid open. Scarcely had my eyes fallen on it, than I trembled, and the circulation of my blood ceaſed,

and

and ſeemed frozen in my veins; I beheld my portrait in miniature, copied from a large picture in the poſſeſſion of lord Clarendon; I doubted if I was awake; I took hold of the miniature, and on lifting it, diſcovered two others, which were the copies of Ophelia's paintings. A thought, rapid as lightning, flaſhed on me and explained the whole. A terrible cry eſcaped from the bottom of my heart; I fell on my knees, and raiſing my eyes to heaven, I exclaimed, "Great God, thou alone haſt ſaved me. O God, protector of credulous innocence, it is thou who delivereſt me; it is thy omnipotent hand which brings to light the proofs of this faithleſs ſeducer's perfidy! O, my huſband, you did not then know my affection for you, and believed me to be unfaithful!" As I ſpoke thus, torrents of tears flowed down my cheeks. During theſe firſt minutes, I felt only the joy of finding an excuſe for lord Clarendon, and of being able to juſtify

 myſelf.

myſelf. Full of gratitude to the Almighty, who had brought about this diſcovery in ſo miraculous a manner, I reflected only on his mercy, and thought not of my errors; but after a few moments, I contemplated with ſorrow the imprudence of my conduct; I ſhuddered at the thought of the fatal meeting to which I had conſented. My repentance augmented the violence of my reſentment. I comforted myſelf by the reflection, that at leaſt my revenge would be complete, and that I ſhould have it in my power to load the author of all the misfortunes of my life with juſt reproaches. I awaited his coming with impatience, and never did time appear to paſs ſo ſlowly. About nine o'clock at night he arrived. I heard him ſpeaking on the ſtairs before I ſaw him; the ſound of his voice made me tremble, and terribly alarmed me. I mechanically drew near a bell by the chimney, took a chair, and ſat down, determined not to leave that ſituation. At that moment the

the door opened, and I was alone with the object of my juſt indignation. I looked at him, and was motionleſs like himſelf. In ſpite of the ſolid grounds we have for hatred and contempt, there is ſomething in the air and countenance of a perſon we have a long time reſpected, which affects and ſtrikes us at leaſt on his firſt appearance. The ſight of the earl humiliated, depreſſed, and gave me an uneaſy ſenſation. I caſt down my eyes, and was unable to articulate a ſingle word. He obſerved the caſket open, and the pictures ſcattered on the table at his entrance. After ſome moments of ſilence, he caſt his eyes on me, and obſerving only in my countenance an expreſſion of grievous embarraſſment, he haſtily conceived the vain hope of again impoſing on me, and approaching me, ſaid, "Well, madam, have you condemned without hearing me?" This ſtrange queſtion reſtored all the violence of my anger. "Perfidious wretch," I exclaimed,

 "vile

" vile impoſtor, are you daring enough to aſk me ſuch a queſtion. Will you venture to contradict theſe dumb but irrefutable witneſſes of the blackeſt treachery? Can you ſupport the looks of the unfortunate victim of your deteſtable artifices? I have loſt my quiet, my happineſs, and my reputation, entirely through you! Inform me now if you have taken any care of the dear and ſacred intereſts committed to your charge in the credulity of friendſhip? have you fulfilled the duties of a virtuous and faithful friend? Barbarian! I repoſed in your breaſt my ſecrets and my ſorrows; your hand dried my tears, and it is you who cauſed them to flow. You, from that moment of confidence, under the impoſing veil of virtue, have nouriſhed in your heart an adulterous paſſion for the wife of your friend." During this addreſs the earl, ſtanding by my ſide, liſtened to me with a diſtracted air; when I ceaſed ſpeaking, he drew back, ſeated himſelf at the other

other end of the room, and ſaid, "It is enough, my fate is decided." He was pale and trembling, and I thought he would faint. He covered his face with his hands, and remained for ſome minutes in that attitude; at length, riſing, he advanced impetuouſly towards me, and ſaid, "Accuſe yourſelf alone as the cauſe of all your misfortunes; attribute them only to your own inxperience. I have not betrayed you; while I could ſee that lord Clarendon loved you, I was deſirous of re-uniting you. Every one who ſurrounded him, recommended a miſtreſs to him; I alone condemned his growing inclination for Ophelia, and when he determined to wear thoſe diſgraceful chains, I concealed it from you; at no time have I attempted to irritate you againſt him. You imagined that I could reſtore you to his affection; you were deceived, and in fact you never directly commiſſioned me to ſpeak to him."—"O heavens," ſaid I, interrupting

ing him, " how came thofe two pictures which lie before you into your poffeffion?"—"Are they not," he replied, "thofe which you defired me to return to lord Clarendon?"—" And do you believe," retorted I, " that it is difficult for me to imagine, that by an artifice, of which I am ignorant, you have contrived the means of replacing in his lordfhip's cabinet, the originals by Ophelia, and of getting poffeffion of my copies, without performing the commiffion I gave you, and confequently without juftifying me to lord Clarendon. In fhort, ought you not to think that I fhould difcover this myftery, and that it is now ufelefs to employ any frefh deception."—" No, no," he exclaimed, " I pretend not to deny my only crime; it is true that I have contrived to return to their place the works of a vile courtezan, and to gain poffeffion of yours, which lord Clarendon was not worthy to poffefs, as he loved you no longer."—" At leaft," I anfwered, " he would have reftored

ſtored me to his eſteem if he had been acquainted with my fidelity. But I now know how to recover that ineſtimable bleſſing ; he ſhall know all, and I will find the means of convincing him of my innocence and regaining his heart, without diſcovering your crimes." At theſe words, the earl's countenance aſſumed an inſulting expreſſion, which I had never ſeen before, and which alarmed me : it was a mixture of contempt, of cruel irony, and determined rage. He ſat down by me, and fixing his eyes on me, ſaid, " You will condeſcend to conceal my crimes, without doubt for the purpoſe of ſcreening me from his revenge! You ought to know, that his life is owing to my kindneſs. This ſword, which twice ſaved his life, is both capable of defending friendſhip and of procuring revenge. Do not be alarmed," he continued, ſeeing that I trembled; " I only mean to quiet you with reſpect to the danger you ſeem to dread on my account. I would

would immediately pierce lord Clarendon's heart if I thought he could reftore you the illufion you have loft; but I had rather he fhould live to avenge me, that you may compare his fentiments with mine. In fpite of my crimes, the recollection of my love will purfue you. It is true you have not been feduced, but you have been fubdued. Will you dare to deny that, but for the accident which has ruined you, you would have been mine? Will you tell lord Clarendon all? Here, give him this key which I received from your hand." At this infulting and terrible reproach, anger got the better of my humiliation, and I exclaimed; "No, that key was only given to you becaufe I thought I was entrufting it to virtue."—"You were mine," he repeated, "I know it; you would never have forgiven your own fault, and I fhould have lamented it with you; but I fhould have affociated myfelf to your fate, your foul would have been identified with mine,

you would have ſhared my remorſe, my torture, and my love. In ſhort, all is over, and I have no farther hope. I ought now to employ myſelf only in diſcharging a duty undoubtedly ſacred, the duty of being juſt towards you. I, madam, will juſtify you in the eyes of lord Clarendon; your ſingle teſtimony would not ſuffice, and beſides, the precautions you would uſe would render the explanation obſcure. I will write you a letter proper to be ſhewn to his lordſhip, and you ſhall have it the night after to-morrow, that is, on Wedneſday, at eleven o'clock. The earl pronounced theſe laſt words affectedly, in order to recall to my mind that I had promiſed the evening before to meet him at eleven o'clock on Wedneſday night. I looked down, and made no reply; we were both ſilent a ſhort time. " The day fixed by yourſelf, madam," ſaid he, " was to be deciſive of my fate, and in fact it will decide it; but it is

time

time to free you from the fight of an object fo odious to you; this fad object of your hatred was but a few hours fince your only friend." Here he ftopped, and his tears began to flow. I felt much affected, and to conceal it, I turned my head afide. "Ah!" continued he, "my heart alone cannot change; your contempt cannot weaken its unalterable fentiments, and even your love could not have rendered them more paffionate. Farewell, madam, farewell for ever; may fuch a parting difarm your anger: pardon my offences, which I am going to expiate." As he fpoke thefe words, he fell at my knees, I felt at once confiderable emotion and alarm; I rofe, he held me by my gown, and forced me back to my feat. "Ah!" exclaimed he, "fuffer me, at leaft, for an inftant, to enjoy the happinefs of being at your feet. Grant that to repentance which love never would have hazarded. O, caft thofe eyes on an unfortunate man who adores

adores you, and who is going to ſuffer the puniſhment of his temerity. Refuſe me not a parting look."—" Be aſſured," I anſwered with a trembling voice, " that I forgive and pity you." At theſe words he ſeized one of my hands which he bathed with tears; I alſo could not refrain from weeping. At this moment we heard a noiſe at the door; it was Thomſon's voice, the earl roſe haſtily, preſſed my hand to his heart, lifted his eyes to heaven, and ſuddenly breaking from me diſappeared. I remained abſorbed in a confuſion of thought and feeling, which it is impoſſible for me to deſcribe or comprehend. I know not whether I was moſt afflicted or pleaſed, whether I regretted or deſpiſed a guilty friend, or admired the energy of his character or the ſenſibility of his heart; but at leaſt I was certain I could not hate him. We pardon but too readily thoſe faults of which we are the occaſion, and women in general have leſs indulgence

for

for ſlight offences cauſed by an ordinary feeling, than for the moſt inexcuſable exceſſes produced by a violent paſſion.

Baniſhing, however, from my mind all recollection of the earl, I fixed my ideas entirely on myſelf, in order to reflect more maturely on my ſituation. I obſerved with rapture that lord Clarendon was a thouſand times leſs culpable than I had imagined; and I had no doubt of the poſſibility of regaining his affections, if I had an opportunity of a complete juſtification of my conduct. But would he not think himſelf obliged to reſent the treatment of lord Elby, who had injured him in ſuch delicate points? This idea made me ſhudder. The earl had promiſed to ſend me a letter, the ſincerity of which would remove every cloud from my conduct, but in what terms would it be couched? ſhould I dare to ſhew it to lord Clarendon, without fearing to irritate him extremely againſt a treacherous friend, who

who undoubtedly would make ſuch a confeſſion with exceſſive haughtineſs, and perhaps uſe expreſſions of inſult towards lord Clarendon? I now believed that the earl really intended to fly his country for ever, at the ſame time I was certain he would not depart before he knew whether lord Clarendon demanded ſatisfaction. Theſe reflections diſtreſſed me. At laſt I reſolved to wait for lord Elby's letter, at the ſame time making all neceſſary preparations for my departure. How eaſily we reſume a ſentiment originating in ſympathy and indefinable attraction, which, independently of all reflection, draws us towards a particular object, and inclines us to prefer it to every other. My love, ſtifled for a time, or rather accumulating in my heart, had never been extinguiſhed; having been able to baniſh lord Clarendon from my thoughts, I yet had never ceaſed to think and feel that no other object could pleaſe and attract me ſo much as himſelf;

himſelf; and to preſerve ſuch an idea, though deſerted, is a ſure proof of the continuance of love. Well-founded alarms diſturbed the pleaſure which I felt in the hope of re-appearing before lord Clarendon with full proofs of my innocence, and I expected the earl's letter in fear and yet with inexpreſſible impatience. The day ſo much deſired at length arrived: I reflected not without pain, that but for the event of the caſket, I ſhould moſt probably on the cloſe of this day have been guilty of the moſt inexcuſable imprudence. The earl had told me I ſhould not receive his letter, before the hour which had been fixed for the meeting; in fact, at ten o'clock a ſervant came to inform me that a man on horſeback from the earl requeſted to ſpeak with me; a moment afterwards I ſaw his valet advance with a letter for me. I trembled as I took the letter, and not daring to open it in the preſence of the man, I told

him

him to wait for an anſwer. "My maſter told me," ſaid he, "that it required no anſwer."—"Not require an anſwer!"—"No my lady."—"Where have you left your maſter?"—"Ninety miles off."—"So far, at what time did he ſet out?"—"At noon."—"And is he well?"—"I believe he is."—"What, did you not ſee him?"—"He ſhut himſelf up in his own room, and only opened the door to give me the letter: I had received all his commands yeſterday evening."—"Are you going to him now?"—"No, my lady, he ordered me to go to London as ſoon as I had delivered the letter, and I am goïng to ſet out inſtantly if your ladyſhip has no commands." Upon this I diſmiſſed the ſervant, and when I was alone, I took up the letter which I had put on the table, and ſaid, "my fate depends on this paper. Has this dangerous man, whoſe diſpoſition is ſo violent and whoſe paſſions are ſo impetuous, written

as

as I ought to wiſh?" As I ſpoke thus, I examined the fatal letter which I dared not open; I remarked that the writing of the addreſs was ſcarcely legible, and I fell into a gloomy reverie; dreadful ideas preſented themſelves confuſedly to my mind, and ſoon became more diſtinct and alarming; this ſtruck me ſo forcibly that I could not conceive how it was they had not occurred before. In wiſhing to clear up my horrible doubts, I broke the ſeal, but ſcarcely had I read a few lines, before my eyes were covered with a thick miſt, and I fainted away. Some minutes afterwards, chance brought one of my women into the room; the neceſſary aſſiſtance was given to me, and I came to my ſenſes; I dreaded being alone, yet wiſhed to be without witneſſes. I ordered my woman into the next room, and as ſoon as ſhe had gone out, I took up the terrible writing which I had watered with my tears, and in ſpite of the exceſs of my grief and

and terror I read it through. The following are its contents:

Lord ELBY *to Lady* CLARENDON.

'Wednefday, 9 o'clock in the morning.

'You are avenged, madam, I promifed 'you it fhould be fo. An active and cer'tain poifon will in a few moments de'liver me from the burthen of life! a 'poifon lefs potent and lefs fatal than that 'which love poured into my veins! 'Defirous of retaining all my faculties while 'I write to you, I fhall not take the 'draught till I have concluded my letter; 'but the veffel which contains it is on my 'table and under my eyes. With death 'before me I fpeak to you for the laft 'time. Yes, I adored you; yes, your firft 'look, like the pure and celeftial fire 'which caufes dreadful mifchief, in'flamed me with a fatal paffion! I ought to 'have fled from you, but I dared to

'rely on virtue after having loſt my rea-'ſon! I found in the event which diſ-'covered to me the ſecret crime of lady 'Elby, a foundation for hope which com-'pleted my folly. I felt that I had it in 'my power to fetter all the wiſhes of lord 'Clarendon with regard to yourſelf, by 'ſhewing him the letters, which inconteſt-'ably prove the illegitimacy of the child 'which bears my name. Lord Clarendon 'perhaps did not feel ſo ſtrong a paſſion 'for you as you did for him, but he de-'lighted in you, and never loved any one 'elſe. The harſhneſs you may have ſeen 'in his conduct, aroſe ſolely from the in-'dignation excited by your apparent falſe-'hood. He has ſaid a thouſand times to 'lord Selden, that ſincerity and ſome 'tokens of repentance on your part would 'have inſured an unconditional pardon. 'You were always preſent to his mind; 'lady Clarendon, faithleſs and perfidious, 'appears ſtill to him a monſtrous pheno-

'menon

'menon which he never could conceive, 'and which annihilated his reaſon; and no 'doubt his heart would always have re-'jected the idea, but for the odious con-'ſpiracy of his whole family united 'againſt you. His mercenary relations 'have but too ſucceſsfully ſeconded my 'guilty deſigns. The hope of inheriting 'lord Clarendon's immenſe eſtate, and 'their hatred of you, have led them to 'commit atrocities of which my paſſions 'would never have made me guilty. 'They have watched your moſt ſecret 'actions, to interpret them at the pleaſure 'of their vile anger; they have produced 'the teſtimony of your ſervants againſt you; 'and introduced the dangerous Ophelia 'to lord Clarendon, who ſought only 'from that intrigue a relief he did not 'find. It is falſe that ſhe quitted him; 'he broke with her, becauſe ſhe once 'dared to ſpeak of you and to adviſe a 'divorce. In ſhort, when you left Lon-

'don, though lord Clarendon thought you
'the most guilty of women, he was in a
'dreadful condition; he shewed so much
'anxiety as to your health, that it was
'apprehended he would one day de-
'termine to pay you a visit in Derby-
'shire. Fresh calumnies were invented
'to divert him from this design. But it
'was he who at that time secretly sent to
'Matlock the celebrated physician, who
'passed three months there and wrote to
'you several times, that, hearing you were
'indisposed, he offered you his services
'and pressed you to accept them. You
'drily answered that you were very well,
'and obstinately persevered in refusing his
'visits. He acted only in obedience to
'lord Clarendon's orders. I told you,
'madam, I would do you justice, the
'only way in your opinion I know is to
'do justice to lord Clarendon; you see I
'have kept my promise; yes, such was
'his conduct, such were his sentiments.

'I im-

'I imposed on you both by the most 'artful devices, without appearing to wish 'to keep you separate. I saw the birth of 'his jealousy, I did every thing I could 'to increase it; I enjoyed his anxiety and 'destroyed his and your felicity; I con- 'ducted you to the borders of the grave, but I was ready to follow you. When 'you commissioned me to carry him the 'proofs of your love and your innocence, 'my only care was to get out of his hands 'the copies you had taken of those pic- 'tures; a painter, whom I gained over to 'my purpose, went to Ophelia and re- 'quested her to lend them him for an 'hour to shew them, as he said, to a cele- 'brated foreign artist: Ophelia gave the 'painter a note to lord Clarendon, and 'the two pictures were brought to me. 'I put the originals into the frames, 'which I sent back immediately, and re- 'tained your copies. The same painter, 'in lord Clarendon's absence, took a copy

' for me in miniature of the large portrait ' of you which hangs in your apartment. ' Before I went to France I wrote to lord ' Clarendon, that if, on his ſeparation ' from you, he did not leave you entirely ' at liberty, I was determined to publiſh ' his ſiſter's diſgrace by circulating her ' letter to Barleton. I did not offer to ' give lord Clarendon ſatisfaction for the ' injuries he thought he had received; his ' well known courage ſets him above all ' ſuſpicion, and his forgiveneſs of an inſult ' can only be attributed to the moſt reſpect- ' able motives. I knew enough of his ' principles and character to be aſſured ' that nothing could induce him to ſhed ' the blood of an old friend, a brother-in- ' law, and I ſhared thoſe ſentiments. ' Beſides, did I not know that lord Cla- ' rendon's murderer would be an object of ' eternal horror to you? ſo that a duel ' between us was impoſſible. I quitted ' England and went to Paris, where I re-

' mained

‘ mained but three months. I ſecretly ‘ returned to the place of your reſidence, ‘ and while my letters, bearing date from ‘ Paris, perſuaded you that we were ſe- ‘ parated by the ſea, I was wander- ‘ ing round your habitation; I fol- ‘ lowed you and watched you. Theſe are ‘ all my crimes; will you believe that in ‘ the midſt of this delirium there was ‘ any happineſs for me, the author and ‘ partner of your ſorrows, a traitor to ‘ honour and to love? At the very time ‘ when I was in your neighbourhood in ‘ London, and was honoured with your ‘ dangerous confidence, I found pleaſure ‘ even in your deſpair. I ſtudied the ‘ emotions of your heart; I beheld you ex- ‘ perience all that I felt myſelf; I was ‘ intoxicated with that love with which ‘ you ſighed for another; in ſpite of the ‘ tortures of jealouſy, it was a pleaſure ‘ to me to obſerve in you the ſame ‘ violence of paſſion which was conſuming

 ‘ me.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI ... RE

'me. Our hearts were capable of loving 'with equal energy; and this ſimilarity 'ſtifled and calmed my remorſe by flat-'tering me with a ſenſeleſs love. Would 'lady Clarendon have preſerved her virtue 'in my ſituation? when the world was 'aſtoniſhed at the alteration in your per-'ſon, you were much more beautiful in 'my eyes! What ſublime character your 'angelic face gave to ſorrow! He who 'has not ſeen you pale, languiſhing, and 'ſhedding tears, has no idea of beauty! 'The pleaſanteſt moments of my life were 'thoſe that I paſſed in Derbyſhire before 'I ventured into your preſence. During 'the winter you did not ſtir out, but I 'breathed the ſame air with you, now in-'habiting a neighbouring village, and then 'a ſolitary cottage. Always alone and in 'diſguiſe, I conſtantly went at the cloſe 'of day to the poplar walk, whence I 'had a ſight of your houſe; my eyes 'were always fixed on the walls which

'incloſed

'inclosed you! One evening that I had 'ventured into the great court-yard, I 'knew that a window I saw open be- 'longed to your apartment; I felt an 'emotion of inexpressible joy on remark- 'ing that your closet door was not shut, 'and though the windows were infinitely 'too high for me to look in, yet I loved 'to think that we were separated only 'by transparent glass; I perfectly dis- 'tinguished the chandelier which is sus- 'pended in the middle of the closet, I 'recollected it with emotion; I was look- 'ing attentively on the five candles which 'were alight in it, when suddenly I per- 'ceived the shadow of your head. It 'was you indeed; I saw your long hair, 'your flowing locks; O, who can con- 'ceive what I felt at that moment! The 'sight of your adorable face could never 'make a more forcible impression on me. 'You were walking about slowly; some- 'times this beloved shadow vanished, but

'immediately re-appeared; ſometimes you 'ſtopped, the ſhadow became then im- 'movable, I beheld it with rapture; it 'ſeemed to expreſs all you felt; I pene- 'trated into your thoughts, I imagined I 'heard your ſighs, I wept with you. 'Thinking only on the ſentiment which 'animated you, I forgot that another was 'the object of it; ſeeing you an intereſting 'victim to love, I joined my groans to 'your ſorrows; I was united to you by 'the ſame deſires and the ſame torments, 'and loſt myſelf in a melancholy and de- 'licious reverie. O, that one who was 'capable of loving thus ſhould degrade 'himſelf by impoſture and perfidy! Mad- 'man that I am! how little have I known 'my heart, and how ill have I fulfilled my 'deſtiny! The happineſs of adoring you 'ſhould have ſufficed me. What did I 'wiſh? To ſeduce you? Alas, the loſs 'of your innocence would have cauſed me 'more remorſe than the deſtruction of

'my

'my virtue. These reflections have 'come too late, and are now superfluous; 'I must die! I must quit you for ever! 'It was impossible to justify you but at this 'expence. If I could endure life after 'making such a confession, I should be only 'the object of your just contempt. But as I 'sacrifice myself for you, I am certain 'that I leave you only the remembrance 'of a generous devotion of myself for your 'happiness. Farewel, my hour is come! '. . . . I know the effect of the poison, 'which is about to freeze my blood. 'My life will not be at an end till the 'close of the day. I shall breathe my last '*at ten or eleven at night*. This is the 'calculation I have made; what I desired 'was, you should read this letter at that 'very hour. Adieu, my hand trembles. 'Alas, I have nothing in this life to look 'back to but agonizing feelings, and a 'frightful delirium; nothing, in short, 'but inexpressible tortures. But I suf-

'fered them for you, and they are dear 'to me. * * * * * It 'is over! Death flows in my veins as 'well as in my heart. Adorable angel! 'It is now that I am your victim! O, 'think, that at the very moment in which 'your eyes are caſt on this paper, mine 'will be on the point of cloſing for ever. 'May one feeling unite us even in this laſt 'moment of my life! O, lift your inno-'cent hands to Heaven, implore on your 'knees mercy for the guilty, pray to the 'Supreme Being that my ſoul may again 'meet yours in eternity. Proſtrated like 'you before him I will offer up the ſame 'prayer when I am dying . . . . . .'

At the concluſion of this terrible and diſtracting letter, I felt a cold ſweat bedew my face, and my hair ſtood on end! Fear on a ſudden ſtopped my tears. I thought I ſaw the unfortunate earl in the laſt agonies of the moſt excruciating torture! I threw myſelf

myſelf on my knees, crying out, O God! have mercy on this unfortunate man. As I pronounced theſe words, I heard the houſe-clock ſtrike eleven! I ſhuddered, and my imagination, forcibly ſtruck, diſturbed my reaſon, and I thought that I heard the ſound of low groans near me. I uttered a dreadful cry, and my women ran in immediately. I ordered them not to leave me, but I remained on my knees and my tears again began to flow. At the end of a few minutes recovering my recollection, I began to reflect that it was not impoſſible that the effect of the poiſon might be ſlower than the earl imagined; and that if I ſent him aſſiſtance without delay, I might yet be able to ſave his life. Although this idea was very improbable, I embraced, it with tranſport, I haſtily roſe, and quickly wrote two lines. I gave the note to Thomſon, and ordered him to ſet out directly and to uſe all poſſible diligence. I did not get into bed, but paſſed the

 whole

whole night and the following day in prayer and lamentation for the unfortunate being of whose death I had been the cause. No other idea during the whole of the time mingled with that of the dying earl; nothing could divert my attention from that cruel thought. I forgot that this event would cause a change in my fate; I forgot myself in the recollection of a deplorable object, the victim of a passion, the violence of which I had too well known not to pity him, and not to conceive to what horrid lengths it might lead him. Thomson returned in about twenty hours. I had waited for his return without hope, and yet he rent my heart when he informed me that lord Elby was no more. He died the night before Thomson arrived, at a quarter after twelve. I learned from Thomson the horrible particulars of this shocking catastrophe! On the day which terminated his life, the unfortunate earl remained locked up in his room till eight

in the evening; he then opened his door and rung for his servant, when he came in he found his master lying on the bed with his watch in his hand. He desired to see the landlord and some other persons; as soon as they were assembled round him, he said, that having for some time been ill of an incurable complaint, he had felt for several hours so much indisposed, that he believed he approached his end, and that he made this declaration, lest his death, which would happen so soon, should be the cause of trouble or alarm to any one. As he finished these words, he gave the landlord a purse containing fifty guineas, and as much more to the only one of his servants that he had kept with him; and pointing to a table, he said, "You will find in that drawer the money I have set apart for the expences of my funeral, which must be celebrated to-morrow; when the ceremony is over, you will go to lord Selden in London, to whom I have sent my

my will, in which I have not forgotten thofe who have ferved me." At the conclufion of this difcourfe he turned himfelf about, took hold of his watch, fixed his eyes earneftly on the hand and ceafed to fpeak. His fervant and all the bystanders burft into tears; they propofed to fend for a phyfician and a clergyman; he did not anfwer, but made a fign which marked his compliance with every thing they wifhed. The clergyman arrived in half an hour; the earl raifed himfelf a little to falute him, and appeared to liften refpectfully to his exhortations. He kept his eyes conftantly fixed on his watch, and when the hour-hand pointed to ten he trembled, and in an inftant threw himfelf from the bed and knelt on the floor. His palenefs fubfided, and he appeared to revive; he joined his hands together, and raifing his eyes to Heaven, prayed with the greateft fervency. Alas, at that dreadful moment I was prefent to his thoughts, he imagined

imagined he was praying with me. He remained in this attitude near an hour; when a phyſician came in, felt his pulſe, and declared that there was no remedy for him. It was propoſed, however, that he ſhould take a draught, to which he conſented. At eleven his ſtrength failed, he leaned on the edge of the bed, and fell into a lethargic fit. He was replaced in the bed, but he gave no further ſigns of ſenſe, and expired in an hour and quarter. This pathetic narrative gave the finiſhing ſtroke to my grief, and my health was ſo much affected, that for three days I had a burning fever, which compelled me to keep my bed the whole of the time: at length, after having paid this juſt tribute of ſorrow to the memory of a moſt unfortunate man, my feelings began to revert to myſelf; the idea of manifeſting my innocence to lord Clarendon diſſipated the troubleſome melancholy of my ſoul, and this delightful thought ſoon abſorbed all others. I retained

tained only a confufed recollection of what I had feen in the earl's letter relative to lord Clarendon's conduct; I only remembered that it contained fome affecting particulars; I had read them at a moment when terror and compaffion had ftifled every other feeling. Trembling, I again laid hold of that fatal letter; I fought for that page, and read it over feveral times with emotions of tendernefs and gratitude. Not only did this explanation juftify lord Clarendon, but it taught me to know ftill better the generofity of his difpofition, and convinced me he had never ceafed to love me, even at the time when he thought me the moft culpable.

Having arranged my affairs, I thought of nothing but my departure. I beheld myfelf at length arrived at the time, when I fhould recover all that I had loft; my tranfports increafed whenever I reflected on this fubject. The neceffary preparations for my journey detained me two

days;

days; I ſpent them in the cloſet, all the pictures in which brought to mind the happineſs of the early part of my marriage. With what rapture did I behold thoſe precious images of a felicity about to be reſtored to me! I enjoyed it already in the delicious recollections of which I had voluntarily deprived myſelf ſo long: I recalled them to my mind with a joy equal to the grief I had experienced in endeavouring to baniſh them. It appeared to me that by thus recalling the paſt, I added to my life all the years of happineſs which had gone by. My imagination was elevated to ſuch an extraordinary degree, that the idea of the unfortunate earl ſcarcely ever intruded; it was ſo eaſy for me to repell it by thinking on lord Clarendon. In ſhort, nothing further detaining me in Derbyſhire; I ſet out one morning at day-break. Intoxicated with the moſt flattering hopes and the moſt agreeable projects, the journey appeared extremely

extremely tedious; in proportion as I approached London my impatience increafed. I had depictured to myfelf in fo many ways the felicity I was going to enjoy, had conjured up fuch delightful ideas, that I would have given half my exiftence to anticipate it a few hours. I figured to myfelf lord Clarendon's furprife at feeing me, and was even pleafed with the fuppofition of his embarraffment and of the conftraint and difdain of his firft reception. I enjoyed beforehand the joy and tranquillity fpread over his countenance; I beheld him examining me in filence, and reading in my eyes overflowing with tears my juftification and my happinefs. In fhort, I reprefented to myfelf the decifive and interefting moment, when I might fay as I rufhed into his arms; "Innocent, profcribed, and juftified, I love you more than ever." Such were the ideas which inceffantly occupied my thoughts during my journey. Alas, how far was I

from

from imagining the misery which awaited me!

In the mean time I approach London; I discover it at a distance, and my eyes are filled with tears. I feel agitated with an universal trembling; I weep, I hurry the postillions, and at length arrive. I traversed the town formerly so much detested, the witness of my injuries and misfortunes, but now the object and end of my desires. All the recollection it excites, instead of contributing to grieve me, increases my joy. I had quitted it in a dying state, and loaded with grief and shame; I compared my flight with my return, and valued at a higher price the unexpected alteration of my fate. Leaning out of the window, I ordered them in a loud voice to drive to lord Clarendon's. I forbad my servants to precede me; I chose to announce myself. I showed myself, and wished every one who passed or met me to recollect who I was; I thought my triumph must be seen in my countenance,

countenance, and that to appear was to juſtify myſelf. At length I perceived the ſtreet and my houſe. At the ſight of the latter I was beſide myſelf, and wiſhed to open the coach door to get out, and to ruſh into the houſe; but the exceſs of my joy, and ſuch violent emotion, deprived me of ſtrength; I breathed with difficulty; my trembling limbs refuſed me ſupport, and I fell back in the carriage. What grief and what terror were about to ſucceed theſe pleaſing tranſports! I am ſtill ſurpriſed that I could ſupport the ſhock of ſo cruel a reverſe, and that I did not expire on the ſpot. As I entered my houſe, I ſaw the court-yard filled with carriages and ſervants; I got out, and being certain of finding lord Clarendon, I flew towards his apartment, intending to aſk for a private interview. I met on the ſtairs an old valet, who had been with him from his infancy; I deſired him to conduct me to his lordſhip; he looked at me, and diſcovering

who

who I was, he cried out, "Alas, my lady, you are arrived too late; my lord is dying." At theſe terrible words, my blood was frozen in my heart, and I fell into a ſwoon on the ſtairs. Cruel ſuccours brought me to life; I opened my eyes, and found myſelf in a room ſurrounded by my women, and obſerved lady Nevill ſeated by the ſide of the bed. "Am I to die," I exclaimed, "is lord Clarendon . . . . ." —"He is ſtill living," ſaid lady Nevill, with a cold and diſdainful air; "you muſt not ſee him."—"Not ſee him," ſaid I, interrupting her, angrily, "and who ſhall hinder me? I ſhall ſubmit to no commands here but lord Clarendon's; he alone has a right to my obedience." At theſe words I roſe haſtily to go out of the room, but lady Nevill detained me, and aſſuming a gentler tone, ſhe ſaid, "You are at liberty to ſee my nephew, madam, but he is dying, and the ſurpriſe which your preſence will cauſe may contribute to haſten

his

his death." I yielded to these reasons, the suggestion of which the distraction of grief had prevented. "Yes," I exclaimed, "yes, I ought to conceal myself from his sight, but at the same time it is my duty to be near him, to watch over, and nurse him without his knowledge." Then, without giving lady Nevill time to reply, I escaped from her hold, and flew towards his lordship's chamber; I stopped at the anti-chamber, and spoke to the servants in a tone which ensured obedience. I desired to see the physician; I asked his opinion, and he completed my anxiety, by telling me that lord Clarendon had been seven days ill of a putrid fever, and now lay at the last extremity. This confirmation of my misfortune was almost as affecting as the first intelligence. In despair, and scarcely able to refrain from groans and sobs, with which I struggled in vain, I followed the physician into lord Clarendon's room; the bed-curtains were drawn

ſo that I could enter without being perceived. A couch was ſet for me near the door, and I remained without motion on it near an hour, my eyes being attentively fixed on the bed, in a ſtate of vacant ſtupor. The contemplation of this fatal ſcene abſorbed every other idea, and I was abſolutely incapacitated from hearing or ſeeing any thing that paſſed about me. At length I was rouſed from my lethargy by the phyſician, who came to tell me that his pulſe was better. Theſe few words gave me freſh ſpirits. This ray of hope reſtored my courage and brought me to myſelf. I was relieved from the ſtupefaction of which the violence of my grief had been the cauſe. I began to caſt my eyes on the ſurrounding objects; I ſaw that the chamber was filled with lord Clarendon's relations and friends; no one came near me, or ſpoke one word. This marked contempt affected me at firſt, but did not excite my ſurpriſe. Every eye, however,

however, was fixed on me; I was examined with the moſt inſulting expreſſion of lively indignation; they whiſpered to each other, and lady Nevill, with a hypocritical and reſerved countenance, liſtened to the diſcourſe, and without anſwering, ſhrugged up her ſhoulders with a ſigh, and regarded me with ſcorn. I ſupported this examination patiently, and found no difficulty in oppoſing indifference and coldneſs to indecency, malice, and affectation. In the evening the phyſician ſpoke in a low voice to lady Nevill; ſhe took him by the arm, with an air of buſineſs, ſuddenly roſe, and led him into the anti-chamber, to which they were followed by every body. This ſudden flight gave me inexpreſſible alarm; I comprehended only that lord Clarendon's ſituation was the ſubject of this conference, and the moſt dreadful ideas immediately preſented themſelves to my mind. While trembling with fright I did not dare to clear up this ſhocking doubt, I heard lord Clarendon

don turn about in his bed and groan. Alas! he was in pain, but he ſtill breathed, and after having felt the height of miſery myſelf, I was too happy at that moment and thanked heaven, as if he were reſtored to me. As lady Nevill did not return, I ſent for the phyſician, and aſked for an account of what had paſſed. "I made a propoſal," ſaid he, "that my lord ſhould be bled; lady Nevill and all the other ladies diſapprove of it, and I dare not take it on myſelf." This information excited the ſtrongeſt anger in me that I ever felt in my life. I took my reſolution directly. "You muſt, Sir, conſult nobody here," I replied, "but myſelf; I alone am miſtreſs in this houſe, and can command it." At theſe words I roſe and went into the antichamber, where, addreſſing lady Nevill, I ſaid, "It is time for me, madam, to be reinſtated in my rights; the diſtraction of a juſt ſorrow has made me hitherto neglectful of them, but I now declare to you,

 I ſhall

I ſhall have the courage to aſſert them for the future. Lord Clarendon's wife, after the reception ſhe has met with, ſees none but ſtrangers here. She does not chuſe them to ſhare with her the ſacred duties to which ſhe devotes herſelf. When lord Clarendon regains his ſenſes, he ſhall decide between us; but till then, his room is my aſylum, and I will ſuffer no one to come here to moleſt me." As I finiſhed theſe words, I went back into the room, and double-locked the door. I then ſent for the two moſt ſkilful phyſicians in London to attend a conſultation. They arrived, and gave their opinion for the bleeding, which operation was inſtantly performed. During this interval, lady Nevill had left the houſe in rage, and was followed by all thoſe whom, together with herſelf, I had baniſhed from the ſick room. She ſpread abroad in the world, that I had returned, with the hope of laying hold of a moment of weakneſs in his lordſhip, to prevail

on him to make a will in my favour if he ſhould have a lucid interval. Thus have all the moſt innocent actions of my life been interpreted! Thus does the world judge on uncertain and deceitful appearances. None of us would judicially condemn to an infamous puniſhment the meaneſt of the people, unleſs his crime were inconteſtibly proved; the idea only of a ſingle unjuſt ſentence of this deſcription is horrible to men of the leaſt delicacy of feeling, and yet every day we unite in a common alliance to diſhonour thoſe very objects which the ties of ſociety, and often thoſe of blood ſhould render the deareſt and moſt intereſting to us. We deprive them, without ſcruple, of their honour, that firſt of bleſſings next to virtue, without which life is a degrading burthen which innocence cannot ſupport, but in a deſert, far from the ſight of thoſe who miſinterpret actions on mere conjectures and ſlight probabilities.

 The

The bleeding of lord Clarendon, however, at firſt produced only the moſt alarming effects. His delirium increaſed, and I heard him ſeveral times mention my name, and by turns accuſe and inquire for me. Every one of his words penetrated to the bottom of my ſoul, and cauſed faintings and palpitations of the heart of inexpreſſible violence. The night was ſtill more dreadful. He ceaſed to ſpeak and move; his pulſe grew weaker, and the phyſician did not conceal from me his alarms at this lethargic attack. "What," ſaid I, "is there then no hope?" He hung down his head and made no anſwer. "O, heavens!" I exclaimed, "he is perhaps no more." As I finiſhed theſe words, I haſtened to the bed-ſide, opened the curtain, and beheld lord Clarendon the firſt time for more than a year! but, great God, in what a condition! pale, disfigured, and his eyes cloſed; without motion

motion or ſenſe. One of his hands lay on the bed. I felt it, and finding it cold and moiſt, I thought he was dead. I fell on my knees, and laid my face, bedewed with tears, on his hand; "Is it thus then," I cried, "that you are reſtored to me, and that I again poſſeſs you. You die, and your unfortunate wife has not the opportunity of juſtifying herſelf, and receiving your laſt ſigh. You deprive me of my fame and innocence! Of what conſequence to me is the vain opinion of the world, which I will fly for ever! Yours alone could have changed my lot: honour, repoſe, felicity, I loſe them all in you." At the concluſion of theſe words, I felt all at once the cold hand which I held in mine make a ſlight motion, and at the ſame inſtant lord Clarendon, in a feeble voice, uttered the following words inarticulately: *Ah, is it ſhe? let her come.* The ſound of his voice, and theſe precious words, were the cauſe of an emotion which was near being fatal to me;

my firſt impulſe was to throw myſelf into his arms; but in attempting to riſe, my ſtrength failed, I ſlipped, and had ſo violent a fall, that my face hitting the bedſtead, I received a blow, which cauſed a violent contuſion on my head. I could not ſuppreſs a cry which my pain excited; ſomebody inſtantly came to my aſſiſtance; I was raiſed, and quickly carried into a cloſet near the room. The phyſician followed, and requeſted me not to go into lord Clarendon's room again till I could ſee him without danger to him; "in ſhort," he added; "we have ſeen him almoſt dead, he is ſtill alive; he has juſt waked from a lethargic ſleep, which, if prolonged a few moments, would have been eternal. You have brought back his ſpirit; he recollected your voice, and has ſpoken; this is a great point gained; it is even ſufficient to afford hopes; but let us not give him freſh ſhocks which he may not be able to ſupport. Nature and love have juſt performed

formed a miracle, we muſt take care that prudence and wiſdom reap the fruit."—"O God," I exclaimed in rapture, "you reſtore me to hope and life, diſpoſe of me, lead me as you will, I abandon myſelf entirely to your pleaſure." As I finiſhed ſpeaking, a ſervant came to tell us, that lord Clarendon was in agitation, that he repeated my name, and appeared to look for me about the room. The phyſician left me to go to him; not being permitted to follow, I approached near the door, and half opening it, I placed myſelf ſo that I could ſee all that paſſed in the room. The phyſician advanced towards the bed, and, after feeling his patient's pulſe, he ſat down on the bed-ſide, and ſaid to him, "Thank heaven, my lord, you will no longer alarm us, you are now raiſed from the dead, and I anſwer for your recovery." I know not how, on hearing this, I was capable of reſiſting my deſire to go and throw myſelf at the feet of him who had juſt

given ſo favourable an opinion: I had no other means of avoiding this temptation, but to fly to the other end of the cloſet, where, burſting into tears, I proſtrated myſelf before the Supreme Being, the ſole arbiter of our deſtinies, and offered up the moſt fervent prayer gratitude could dictate. I then returned to the door; I heard the dear voice of lord Clarendon, and liſtened in trembling. He aſked where his ſiſters and lady Nevill were; the phyſician replied, that being fatigued with ſitting up ſo many nights, they had retired to reſt. Lord Clarendon ſaid no more, but kept ſilence for more than a quarter of an hour, then, in a feeble tone, reſuming the converſation, he ſaid, "Lady Clarendon is here; where is ſhe?"—"Yes, my lord," replied the phyſician, "ſhe is here, but I conjure you not to ſee her to-day. You are not yet in a ſtate to ſupport a long converſation, and it is time to put an end to this." After ſaying this, he went from the

the bed, and ſat down at the other end of the room. Half an hour afterwards, lord Clarendon called to him, and ſaid, in a trembling tone, which affected me, "She need fear nothing, you may aſſure her from me, that I ſhall ſee her without pain, and . . . . ." He did not conclude; a deep ſigh interrupted his ſpeech; the phyſician ſaid, "Yes, my lord, to-morrow," and returned to his place.

I wrote immediately to lady Nevill that her nephew was out of danger, and wiſhed to ſee her. She ſent no anſwer, and did not come. Towards evening, lord Clarendon again called the phyſician, and ſpoke to him of me ſeveral different times. "Confeſs," ſaid he to him, "did ſhe not think I was dead? I only recollect the piercing cry ſhe uttered when I recovered my ſenſes. In her firſt emotions," added he, raiſing his eyes to heaven, "ſhe felt only frightened."—"You will do her more juſtice," interrupted the phyſician,

" when you hear the particulars of her conduct."—" Ah," retorted lord Clarendon quickly, " you do not know her."—" No," replied the physician, " but I have eyes, and believe what I see: there is always some want of address in affected feelings, which discovers their falsehood, and, believe me, I have some experience on that subject, and am not easily deceived." Lord Clarendon shook his head, said no more, and the conversation terminated.

The night was calm and decisive. I retired to rest at five; at noon the physician came into my chamber, and told me lord Clarendon was perfectly well, that he had asked for me several times, and that it was determined I should see him, but for a short time, and on condition that neither of us spoke. " I pray you," added the physician, " not to affect him; I wish the sight of you to gratify him, without causing any dangerous emotion, therefore, madam, do yourself some little violence, and consider

that his life perhaps depends upon it."—"It is ſufficient," I anſwered; "rely on me." I then roſe, and haſtily putting on a dreſs, I went down, under the conduct of the phyſician. He made me wait a moment at the door, while he went to inform lord Clarendon; he ſhortly returned to introduce me. He took me by the hand, and led me to the bed. I ſtood ſtill, without ſaying a word, in a trouble and confuſion impoſſible to deſcribe, which was increaſed by the conſtraint impoſed. Lord Clarendon was ſitting up in his bed, his body leaning towards the ſide where I ſtood; with one hand he ſupported himſelf in this uneaſy poſition, and with the other, he drew back the curtain. He looked at me at firſt with tenderneſs, but afterwards he grew pale, and haſtily turned himſelf on on the other ſide, with an expreſſion of ſorrow, and an exclamation which pierced me to the ſoul. The phyſician ſhut the curtains, and led me out of the room. It

was undoubtedly infinitely painful to fee lord Clarendon again without daring to fpeak to him, or enter on my juftification; but what pleafant reflections prefented themfelves to confole me. He was out of danger, and he loved me ftill; believing me guilty, he had juft given me the moft affecting proofs of fenfibility in his firft emotions on his reftoration to life. In proportion as his ideas became lefs confufed, he reproached himfelf for it, and endeavoured to ftifle, or at leaft conceal it; but I was at the bottom of his heart; one word would be fufficient to reftore me to all my rights. "Yes," I faid, "fince I am ftill beloved, when I have fpoken, when he fhall have learned all that I have fuffered, gratitude and pity, in union with love, will render him more delicate and tender than ever. He required, perhaps, this union of fentiments to be able to love like me. The recollection alone of his injuftice and my fufferings will fuffice to intereft him in

my

my favour, and endear me to his heart; in ſhort, our union will be a thouſand times more ſolid and happy than during the fortunate, but ſhort period which preceded the long interval of my torments and ſorrow." Thus I intoxicated myſelf with the pleaſures of a chimerical future, which I was doomed not to enjoy. How weak is man! The moſt prudent foreſight is only a vain dream, generally diſperſed by the event. His imagination deceives and miſleads him; ſhe depicts pains and pleaſures which are never realized. He who in writing the hiſtory of a man, ſhould only relate the events of his life, would not afford the means of judging whether he were happy or miſerable. Independently of our feelings, it is the connection of our ideas and reflection which forms our deſtiny. If our preſent happineſs ſeems not ſolid, though it might laſt for ever, yet we enjoy nothing, and are to be lamented. If the real happineſs or misfortune which we

experience, are only left to us, we ſhall be deprived of almoſt all our moſt exquiſite pleaſure, and moſt inſupportable pains.

Every moment ſeemed now to re-eſtabliſh lord Clarendon's health; lady Nevill returned, and I kept in my own room, reſolved not to quit it till I could obtain a private conference with his lordſhip. The phyſician would not allow us to converſe for eight days. One evening a packet, addreſſed under cover to me, was delivered; I found in it a printed paper, which I read; it contained the following article: 'The unfortunnte lord Elby, 'whom an attachment but too well known 'has kept concealed for a year in Derby-'ſhire, has juſt terminated his brilliant 'career at the age of thirty-four, in the 'ſmall obſcure village of ——. She who 'has ſacrificed ſo much to him, has at 'length ſacrificed him alſo to a new paſſion, 'inſpired, it is ſaid, by a young nobleman,

'who

'who ſettled a ſhort time ſince in her neigh-
'bourhood. The earl, who in ſpite of
'his underſtanding, and the extent of his
'knowledge, had relied on the conſtancy
'of a woman without morals, could not
'ſupport ſuch a reverſe. He quitted the
'caſtle of —— on Tueſday, and died the
'next day. He has left a ſon and an
'inconſolable widow, whoſe virtues merit-
'ed a better fate. She is dying with grief,
'and though ſhe is the tendereſt of
'mothers, her ſon at this early period
'affords her no conſolation; they have been
'obliged to be ſeparated, becauſe ſhe is
'too much affected by the reſemblance he
'bears to his unhappy father.'

It was not difficult for me to conjecture the hand which had ſent this libel; and I was not inſenſible to the reflection of its being circulated in London. Then it was that I was much chagrined that I had it not in my power completely to juſtify myſelf, except to lord Clarendon, ſince it was

was abſolutely impoſſible to ſhow the unfortunate earl's letter to any other perſon in the world: my reſpect alone for his memory would have prevented me, if this writing had not contained an account of lady Elby's crime, and in addition, other facts to the diſcredit of his lordſhip's family. I conſoled myſelf with the thought that the ſingle teſtimony of lord Clarendon would ſuffice to deſtroy the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt me, and that our behaviour to each other would completely confound my enemies and accuſers. The phyſician came ſeveral times a day to bring me intelligence of lord Clarendon's health. I ſpoke to him of lady Elby, and he confirmed the extraordinary fact mentioned in the libel. The Counteſs in fact pretended to trace the features of her unfortunate huſband in her ſon, and ſeemed ſo much affected by the reſemblance, that her child had been taken from her ſight.

Lady

Lady Nevill, once more about lord Clarendon's perſon, painted me in the blackeſt colours; and even on the day I was to ſee him again, having demanded a private audience, I received the moſt formal denial, and was poſitively ordered to return immediately to my ſolitude. The phyſician announced this to me with tears in his eyes, but was aſtoniſhed to find me ſo little affected by the meſſage. I merely ſaid, "Is he in a condition to hear an explanation, which will equally ſurprize and affect him? can he, in ſhort, ſupport a violent emotion?"—"Yes," replied the phyſician, "if it will not afflict him."—"Well then," ſaid I, with tranſport, "congratulate one who, in a quarter of an hour, will be the happieſt woman in England. I owe lord Clarendon's life and mine to you; my happineſs is your work; you ſhould be the firſt to hear of it." After ſpeaking thus, I took out of a caſket my two copies of Ophelia's drawings; I had

had on a long black cloak, under which I concealed them. I flew towards lord Clarendon's apartment; I went into a closet near him, and sent in word that I earnestly requested he would instantly allow me a moment's conversation. I waited a long time; at last the valet de chambre returned, and gave me a note, written by lady Nevill, and containing these words:

'My nephew commissions me to tell 'you, madam, that he is irrevocably determined not to see you, and expects that 'you will not unnecessarily prolong your 'stay in London.'

After I had read this note, I hastily rose, the valet suspecting my design, stood in my way, and told me I could not go in. I did not deign to answer him; he dared not persist; I went out, crossed another room; and arrived without impediment at lord Clarendon's chamber, the door of which I found open, and on a sudden I presented myself before him. This sudden appearance

ance ſtruck him and all thoſe who ſurrounded him motionleſs with aſtoniſhment. I ſtopped, and after conſidering for a moment this numerous aſſembly, compoſed chiefly of my enemies, who exulted at my misfortunes and humiliation, I felt, I confeſs for the firſt time in my life, a ſecret emotion of pride and vanity, which added to my joy, and got the better for an inſtant of the other feelings of my heart. Every eye was fixed on me; confidence, haughtineſs, and pleaſure, were at once expreſſed in my countenance, and filled the ſpectators with confuſion. There was a moment of ſilence, occaſioned by ſurpriſe, during which I feaſted my eyes with ſo pleaſant a ſpectacle. At length, turning them towards lord Clarendon, I forgot the vain triumph, and was ſolely occupied with the only object worthy my attention. He was ſeated at a window with lady Nevill, at a little diſtance from the reſt of the company. I walked towards him, and ſaid,

"I will

"I will not quit you till you have granted me a moment's converſation : when you have heard what I have to ſay, I will depart, if you wiſh it, for ever." The air of ſerenity, and the tone of confidence with which I pronounced theſe words, added to their aſtoniſhment. He roſe, and turning towards lady Nevill, ſaid, "Wait, I ſhall not be long." Lady Nevill ſmiled contemptuouſly, and ſpoke to him in a low voice : he quickly replied aloud, "You ſhall ſee whether I am weak or not." At theſe words he came to me with an air of the greateſt ſeverity, propoſed to me to follow him, and we went out together. When he found himſelf alone with me in the firſt room, I ſaw that he trembled ; he ſtopped, and leaning upon a chair, ſaid to me, "Well, madam, explain yourſelf."—"No," I replied, with an emotion which almoſt prevented me from ſpeaking, "we may be overheard here." We then went into the adjoining apartment ; I left him for a mo-

a moment to ſhut all the doors; then, arrived at the happieſt moment of my life, I gave looſe to the feelings of my heart; I ran and caſt myſelf at his feet with tranſport, and with a vehemence which drew tears from his eyes in ſpite of himſelf. The exceſs of my joy and happineſs, and an inconceivable and delicious ſenſation, entirely deprived me of ſpeech; my looks alone ſpoke to his lordſhip, and I could do nothing but weep, as I ardently embraced his trembling knees, which he in vain endeavoured to extricate from my arms. He fell gently on a ſofa, and holding out his hand to raiſe me from the ground, he ſaid, "Ceaſe, ceaſe theſe ſuperfluous emotions. Ah, if you had uſed ſuch arms the laſt time I ſaw you before your departure from London, I ſhould then have forgotten every thing; now it is too late. You have deprived me of the happineſs of my life, do not attempt at leaſt to deſtroy that repoſe which is reſtored to me." Theſe words, pronounced in the moſt gentle and affec-

tionate tone, penetrated to my heart, and laying hold of his offered hand, I bathed it with tears, and felt his fall on my face. "Ah," ſaid he, in a broken voice, "what do you expect from this tardy repentance, and when you have added to the errors which ruined you . . . . ! Are you then ignorant of the freſh diſgrace which the death of your unfortunate ſeducer has brought on you? What is your wiſh ?" he continued, in a firmer tone; "leave me; I neither can nor ſhould pardon you."—"Pardon me," I cried. "And would you ſee me, do you imagine, if Iwere guilty ?"—"What," interrupted he, "have you the audacity to pretend you are innocent? Whatever may be your faults, your youth, I confeſs, your tears, and your remorſe, ought to affect me; but impoſture . . . . . ."—"Look at me well," I ſaid; "look at me well. The expreſſion you ſee in my countenance is not that of a criminal or a ſupplicant. Behold in my eyes the triumph of innocence and the pureſt of joys." At theſe words, lord

lord Clarendon turned pale, and regarded me with extreme ſurpriſe. The two pictures which I had under my cloak juſt then fell down; I looſened the cloak immediately, and threw it over them to conceal them. Lord Clarendon, petrified with aſtoniſhment, examined me in ſilence. "Yes," continued I, "yes, I am innocent; yes, you alone were culpable, and I forgive you." As I ſpoke thus, I roſe, and threw myſelf into his arms. His emotion was ſo violent, that I was afraid he was not well; but his paleneſs going off, he ſaid to me, "In the name of heaven explain yourſelf."—"Ah!" replied I, "condeſcend to believe me before I produce the proofs."—"Proofs?" interrupted he, fixing on me an anxious look. "Yes, inconteſtable proofs, which will explain every thing."—"What, did he write to you before his death?" I made no anſwer. Our eyes met, and he exclaimed, "you are innocent! You!"——

Our tears flowed again and mingled together, he preſſed me to his breaſt, and ſaid, "I believe you. If you impoſe on me you will be the greateſt ſufferer."—"Nothing is now wanting to my happineſs," cried I; "I expected to derive it only from reaſon and juſtice, I owe it all to love." Then uncovering my two pictures, I ſaid, "Look at theſe, do you know them?"—"I think I ſee the pictures which are in my cloſet."—"No, you ſee only copies from them."—"Who painted them?"—"I."—"At what time?"—"While you were at Bath; I fetched them in the night, and that was the cauſe of my going into the parlour."—"Is it poſſible? but what was your intention, and why not inform me of it?" Here I interrupted and related to him in a few words thoſe particulars which could explain the reaſons of this tranſaction. I then gave him an account of the chances which brought into my hands the earl's caſket, and

and laſt of all I drew out of my portfolio that unhappy man's letter and gave it him. Lord Clarendon in amazement opened it with a trembling hand, but ſcarcely had he caſt his eyes on the firſt ſix lines, before he fell haſtily at my feet, and exclaimed, while he ſhed a torrent of tears, "And can you pardon me?"

O, immortal remembrance! O, affecting and pure recollection, the only one which I can look back to without chagrin or without danger. My heart was not equal to the emotions which agitated me. Lord Clarendon, as violently affected as myſelf, ſaid every thing that the moſt ardent love, gratitude, and repentance could dictate. He tore himſelf from my arms, fell at my feet, and bathed them with tears; I never ſaw ſo much tenderneſs in him; in ſhort, it ſeemed as if my ſoul had changed places with his, and had communicated all the ardour and energy of my feelings. When the violence of theſe

firſt tranſports was a little calmed, I conjured, nay compelled, lord Clarendon to read the whole of the letter. After the peruſal, he wiped off the tears with which his face was bedewed, roſe haſtily, and taking me by the hand, he ſaid, "It is time that virtue ſhould receive the homage due to her. Come, my collected family undoubtedly are ſtill waiting, come and triumph before them."—"Stop," interrupted I; "ſtop; my juſtification muſt reſt with you. You cannot ſhew that letter without diſhonouring your ſiſter and hazarding her child's eſtate; beſides, we ſhould reſpect the memory of an unfortunate man who has been your friend; he ſacrificed himſelf for me, for my repoſe, my happineſs, and my fame; his laſt ſentiments and his deplorable end expiate and repair all the miſchief of which he was the author. Let us conceal from every eye this odious and ſorrowful intelligence. The world will ſay that I have ſeduced you

you by artifice, and that you were weak enough to be impofed on; but of what confequence is that to me? Heaven, you, and my own heart are the witneffes and judges of my innocence; they are fufficient, I defire no others."—"Pure and fublime foul!" exclaimed lord Clarendon, "for the future direct all the actions of my life, be my guide, enlighten and conduct an unhappy man who has been fo long in error; but," continued he, "without this fatal proof which honour forbids us to produce, juftice will be done to your virtue; my refpect, my admiration, and my idolatry will open all eyes, and your juftification will be pronounced as foon as we are feen together." Then attending to nothing but his impatience, he defired me to follow him, and we foon arrived at the chamber-door; he haftily opened it, and as we entered we perceived that every body was waiting for us. Lady Nevill advanced towards us with an air of in-

quietude, and ſtarted back in aſtoniſhment when ſhe beheld lord Clarendon, the moment he came into the room, go down on his knees to me; this action, for which I was not prepared, ſurpriſed me; I thought at the moment, that as I had it not in my power to produce clear and ſatisfactory proofs of my innocence to them, lord Clarendon would ſeem to the ſpectators a man degraded to the laſt degree by artifice and ſeduction. This idea gave riſe to the cruelleſt embarraſſment; I felt that I bluſhed, and was ſtill more diſconcerted; every part of my behaviour at that inſtant muſt have depicted confuſion, ſhame, and the moſt painful conſtraint. In the mean time a profound ſilence reigned around us; lord Clarendon, after recovering a little from the internal diſorder he himſelf experienced, addreſſing lady Nevill, ſaid, "You have heard my complaints, you will to-day be witneſs to an authentic avowal of their injuſtice.

injuſtice. I ought to expiate my faults, for which I ſhall never pardon myſelf, at my wife's feet, and before the whole of both our families. I have the moſt convincing and poſitive proof of lady Clarendon's innocence and incomparable virtue; I here with raptures aſſert it on my oath, in the midſt of my relations and friends; if they heſitate to believe it, I ſhall look on them as the enemies of my peace, my honour, and my veracity."

During this ſpeech, which my confuſion made me think extremely long, I ventured ſometimes, as by ſtealth, to glance my eyes towards lady Nevill, and two or three other perſons in the room: I ſaw clearly that this ſcene appeared to them exceſſively ridiculous. They bit their lips to prevent their laughing, they jogged each other, and looked up in amazement; in ſhort, contempt, mockery, and the moſt inſulting pity for lord Clarendon was exhibited on every countenance, and particularly on

lady Nevill's, whom I more than once obſerved ſhrugging her ſhoulders and making other ſigns of indignation. When lord Clarendon ſpoke of my incomparable virtue, the expreſſion excited an emotion in the company which made me ſtart; I thought they intended to interrupt him, I caſt down my eyes and felt that I was near being very unwell. Afterwards reflecting that my paleneſs and confuſion would ſeem to indicate a guilty conſcience, my trouble increaſed, and I completely loſt all confidence. They ſoon, however, put on the appearance of quieter conduct; but ſeveral of them pretended to blow their noſes, in order to have a pretext for covering their faces with their handkerchiefs, and lady Nevill's two daughters retired from the circle and placed themſelves behind their mother and aunt, ſo as not to be viſible. Lady Nevill leaned on the arm of her niece lady Bolton, and both of them holding their fans open,

open, covered half their faces. Thefe cruel obfervations pierced me to the heart; one may brave the public opinion when one's-felf alone is attacked, one's innocence then fupports one againft injuftice. There is even a greatnefs of mind and a heroifm in loving virtue for herfelf; our own approbation is the reward, and he who obtains that is the more worthy of efteem, and more capable of appreciating his own value. But what courage is fufficient to ftruggle with the horrid misfortune of beholding thofe we love held in contempt, and being the caufe of it ourfelves? When one would facrifice one's life for his glory, how is it poffible to endure the mifery of rendering him the object of ridicule and public cenfure? Thefe confiderations which had not prefented themfelves before, now crowded together into my mind to harafs me in the fhort fpace of feven or eight minutes. At length lord Clarendon having finifhed fpeaking, rofe and looking at lady

Nevill, waited for her anſwer. After a ſhort ſilence, ſhe ſaid, in an ironical tone, "I am happy that you are content; that is all that can be deſired." At theſe words ſhe turned about, called her daughters, and went out immediately with them. The other ſpectators thinking themſelves obliged to be more circumſpect and decorous, approached lord Clarendon and me in confuſion, and ſtammered out a few cold compliments with a very bad grace. Lord Clarendon could ſcarcely conceal his diſcontent and indignation any longer; but I, ſeeing that he was about to vent his anger, affected a ſerene and ſatisfied air, and ſpoke to every body; they were thinking of taking leave, but I detained them by queſtions they were obliged to anſwer, and the converſation became more general and intereſting; curioſity to know how I ſhould ſupport it, induced them to ſtay a tolerably long time; this was exactly what I wiſhed. At length the whole company

pany rofe together to depart, I then accofted the ladies who were affembled, made them many compliments, and expreffed the pleafure with which I fhould receive their vifits and cultivate their friendfhip. They muttered between their teeth a few words I did not underftand; I affected to be highly pleafed, as if they had faid the handfomeft things to me, and I even embraced the one with whom I knew lord Clarendon would be the moft grieved to quarrel; fhe received it very ungracioufly, and affuredly felt forry that I fhould have given an opportunity to any one to fay fhe deferved fuch a preference. But I reaped the fruit I expected from this conduct, which coft me dear. Lord Clarendon, feeing me appear content, was perfuaded I had reafon to be fo; he grew calm, and I avoided a fcene which no doubt would have been both violent and difagreeable.

When lord Clarendon and I were alone, I eaſily perceived that he concealed from me a part of his chagrin to avoid giving me uneaſineſs; he ſpoke only of lady Nevill, and ſaid he would never ſee her again. With reſpect to the others, he ſaid, "You will eaſily bring them back." —"I hope ſo," replied I, "but if the opinion of the world were as indifferent to you as it is to me!"—"The opinion of my friends and relations," he anſwered with a ſigh, "can never be indifferent to me." Theſe few words diſcovered to me the ſecret ſituation of his heart, and gave me great pain. The remainder of the day he was leſs affectionate and tender, he was thoughtful and abſent; towards evening he had a ſlight fever which excited the cruelleſt alarm in me. He would not permit me to ſit up with him; I therefore retired to my chamber, but had neither ſleep nor reſt. The happi-

neſs of which I had formed ſo delicious a notion, and which I had enjoyed for a few moments now vaniſhed from my ſight. I knew now that extraordinary events may affect, but cannot change cold and weak characters. Theſe violent ſhocks produce lively and impaſſioned emotions, but when the heat is not nouriſhed at the bottom of the heart, this factitious fire is ſoon extinguiſhed. Theſe ſorrowful reflections occupied me a great part of the night: always in extremes, and incapable of moderating the impetuoſity of my imagination, I exaggerated my miſery, which was ſupportable if compared with that I had already endured; and I tortured my fancy to prove myſelf as much to be lamented as ever. Thus it is that the experience of the moſt dreadful affliction does not harden us againſt the moſt trifling we may afterwards ſuffer; an exceſſive ſenſibility will always retard the fruits of reaſon and the progreſs of wiſdom.

As ſoon as day appeared, I went down to lord Clarendon, I found him awake, much afflicted and altered, but without fever. He told me that he intended to invite all his family to ſupper, except lady Nevill and the counteſs of Elby, whoſe mourning kept her at home. He wrote cards of invitation in his name and mine, and ſent them immediately. He fixed a diſtant day in order to leave no excuſe. In ſpite of this precaution I ſaw the event, and fretted myſelf before-hand. The anſwers were, that they would come. They could not avoid accepting the invitation, but I expected nothing further. Lord Clarendon flattered himſelf with the contrary, and aſſumed an air of greater gaiety. Although his health was ſtill very precarious, he haſtened to make a viſit to lady Elby: he returned ſo affected and ſo enraged, that I dared not inquire what had paſſed. He told me only that they had had a quarrel, paſt reconciliation, and

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he ſeemed more irritated than grieved; for the exceſs of his anger left him no room for regret. His health, however, continued in a languiſhing ſtate, and he did not advance in his recovery. So far was he from gaining ſtrength, that he grew thinner and weaker every day. I took advice on his ſituation, and was quieted by an aſſurance that he had no fever, and that his debility was the inevitable conſequence of a long and dangerous diſeaſe. He teſtified towards me a tenderneſs and gratitude which would have ſatisfied any one elſe, but I did not find him ſuch as he appeared at firſt; he was not ſo happy as I wiſhed. I ſaw in the future a thouſand freſh ſubjects for diſcontent and ſorrow, and theſe ideas filled my mind with anxiety. Lord Clarendon ſpoke of his former injuſtice, and of the cruel artifices of lord Elby. "It was," he ſaid, "at the time of your ſerious indiſpoſition that my ſuſpicions were confirmed; I watched you and

and ſaw clearly that lord Elby adored you; he concealed from me neither his tears nor his deſpair, and I no longer doubted of your mutual intelligence. I attributed the firſt words you ſpoke, which were concerning myſelf, to remorſe and averſion; in ſhort, every thing contributed to impoſe upon me. Lady Nevill drew from me the ſorrowful ſecret of my affliction; ſhe then produced againſt you the teſtimony of your own women, and my ſervants confirmed their accuſation. You know the reſt, and the reſolution I adopted; it coſt me dear: you excited great compaſſion; this feeling drove from my heart a reſentment which I thought juſt, and I wept for your ſufferings as much as for my own." This narrative depicted to me all the miſery I myſelf had endured. But how cold did he ſeem, and how clearly did he make me perceive the extreme and cruel difference between my feelings and his lordſhip's! I beheld myſelf,

ſelf, in thoſe horrible moments he recalled to my mind, in deſpair and dying, deteſting life, bathed in tears, and renouncing ſociety and the univerſe, to give myſelf up entirely to my grief and to a fatal love, which neither injuſtice, inſult, nor ingratitude could deſtroy or even weaken. On the other hand, I beheld the object of this ſtrong and tender affection, who was nearly in a ſimilar though a more afflicting ſituation, ſurrender himſelf to riot and vain diſſipation to ſtifle the feeble regret he felt in the boſom of pleaſure. I ſaw him ſeeking ſociety, amuſing and flattering himſelf, while he forgot me, that he had known what it was to love, and was ſtill ſenſible of its power. Thus every converſation, each reflection, contributed by little and little to deſtroy my felicity. I again felt thoſe emotions, which ſeemed authorized even by reaſon, and I ſoon learned, but it was too late, that it was much eaſier for me to triumph entirely over an attachment

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ſo tender and ſo violent, than to keep it within any bounds. We employ all our ſtrength in a great effort, and as it is in proportion to the energy of our paſſions, it is always poſſible to ſucceed. But we frequently fail on thoſe occaſions which require leſs courage; and the victory which promiſes the greateſt honour is almoſt always the eaſieſt and moſt ſecure.

Lord Clarendon, always occupied by the ſingle deſire of juſtifying my conduct, made ſeveral viſits to his friends for the purpoſe of relating all he had in his power; he did not omit the ſtory of the pictures, and even went ſo far as to communicate lord Elby's treachery with regard to them. But he could not ſhew the letter which was in my poſſeſſion, ſo that his narratives made not the ſlighteſt impreſſion.

The time paſſed on, and we at length arrived at the day, ſo much deſired by lord Clarendon, which had been fixed for the

the ſupper. In the courſe of the day we received letters of excuſe, which contained ſuch plauſible reaſons and pretexts as induced lord Clarendon to give implicit credit to their ſincerity. About nine two or three gentlemen arrived, were received with rapture; others came in afterwards, but no ladies made their appearance, and I obſerved lord Clarendon began to be uneaſy and vexed. He did not remain long in uncertainty: in the ſpace of half an hour, we received fifteen notes from ladies who had been invited, containing excuſes on the moſt improbable pretences, and by no means couched in the politeſt terms. I felt at that time, how much trifles could affect one when any importance is attached to them; for my own part, they gave me perſonally no concern, but the condition in which I ſaw lord Clarendon cauſed inexpreſſible anxiety. We were obliged to ſit down to table, which was laid for fifteen or

ſixteen people too many. Lord Clarendon was pale and trembling, he could neither ſpeak a word or conceal the exceſs of his anger; the ſpectators of this ridiculous ſcene could not avoid at times expreſſing the ſigns of a malicious gaiety, which eaſily diſcovered to me the part they took in this event. I alone kept up the converſation. I ſhortened the time of ſupper as much as poſſible; but a freſh incident, ſtill more frivolous, totally diſconcerted his lordſhip. He had been accuſtomed, when he gave great entertainments to all his friends, to have a large baſket in the drawing-room in which was a noſegay for every lady, wrapped in paper, with her name on it. In his confuſion, he had forgotten to countermand this ſuperfluous gallantry; ſo that after ſupper, as he entered the room, this fatal baſket was the firſt object which ſtruck his attention. He turned pale, and bluſhed alternately; his embarraſſment was ſo diſtreſſing, that it ſhould have excited only com-

compaſſion, yet I ſaw thoſe whom he called friends, lay hold on the moſt awkward pretexts to give vent to indecent laughter, which they could not ſuppreſs. Indignation relieved me from the ſort of confuſion which gained on me in ſpite of my exertions; and turning towards his lordſhip, I ſaid, "You thought this morning that you had feeling and polite relations and faithful friends; this night your eyes are opened, and this diſtreſſing proof has at leaſt convinced you on whom you may rely. Conſider, at preſent, that ſuch rude behaviour degrades only thoſe who are guilty of it, not thoſe who are the objects of it; the only proper vengeance is ſilence and contempt."—"Yes," he replied, with eyes inflamed with rage, "I deſpiſe women who are led by hatred and envy; but if there exiſts a man, whoever he may be, that dares to attack the reputation of the only object I am bound to love, honour, and reſpect, let him declare his name,

name, or I denounce him beforehand to the world as a vile and cowardly impoſtor, who dreads the juſt vengeance which honour and truth would compel me to take on him." Upon this ſpeech, which made me tremble, every countenance aſſumed a ſerious aſpect. One of the gentlemen took up the diſcourſe, to ſay that moſt aſſuredly thoſe who had come to the appointment with eagerneſs and punctuality, could not imagine they were comprehended in the claſs of perſons ſubject to animadverſion. Lord Clarendon made no other reply than a look full of contempt, and taking me by the hand, he haſtily left the room, drawing me after him. As ſoon as we were alone he no longer reſtrained himſelf, but diſcovered without diſguiſe how much he was affected. He even ſpoke of lord Elby's letter, and teſtified the moſt poignant regret that he could not ſhow it! "If you could," ſaid I, "what purpoſe would ſuch a confidence anſwer with perſons who

deſert

desert you and detest me; they, indeed, would have in their possession a secret which justifies me, but what could you gain by betraying it? Perhaps you would increase their hatred for me, by taking away from them the excuse, or at least the pretext which they think sanctions it. If you had a true friend, if you could name me only one, I would restore the fatal letter to you, and say, "Go and justify me to a heart worthy of you; entrust him with my innocence and our secrets, and let friendship augment our happiness, if possible, by sharing it. But you have no friend but myself; you are beloved only by me; if my affection would suffice for you, how happy might we be; but, alas! we cannot be so but at this expence." These last words moved and affected him; he replied with all that gentleness and delicacy which naturally accompanied his conversation. He touched my heart; he quieted, but did not satisfy me. The veil was at length rent away; I loved

I loved him, perhaps, as much as ever, but I knew him too well to be convinced by his proteſtations of affection, and aſſurances of a paſſion equal to my own. I liſtened to him with pleaſure; his delicate expreſſions flattered my ear; but the deluſion having vaniſhed which made them formerly ſo dear to me, I heard them without rapture.

Two days after this converſation, as we were breakfaſting together in the morning, a newſpaper was brought in; while I made the tea, lord Clarendon opened it, and read it to himſelf; on a ſudden he roſe and left the room. At the end of a few minutes, ſeeing he did not return, I went after him; I found him in his ſtudy, ſtill reading the paper, which he had carried with him. As I caſt my eyes on his countenance, I immediately conjectured a part of the truth. When he perceived me, he tried to conceal the paper, but I laid hold of it and tranquilly ſaid,

"I know

"I know what this paper contains, it is uſeleſs to attempt to diſguiſe it: the ſtory of our re-union is told, and the ſupper is not forgotten. It is attempted to cover you with the greateſt ridicule, and I am repreſented in the moſt odious colours: they perhaps have added, that after having betrayed you, I have ſeduced you to embroil yourſelf with all thoſe perſons who could enlighten you, and ruin me in your eſteem."—"You have not gueſſed all," he replied; "here, ſince you wiſh it, take and read this abſurd calumny." As he ſaid this, he gave me the paper, pointing out the article; the ſubject was our ſupper. After ſaying that only five or ſix gentlemen, out of eighteen ladies and as many gentlemen who were invited, came, they add, that having ordered an entertainment which I had forgotten to countermand, on a ſudden, after the ſervice of the fruit, the hall doors, opening with ſome noiſe, diſcovered an illuminated gallery, decorated

with garlands of flowers, and that at the ſame moment the moſt melodious and lively muſic was heard. They added many reflections on the *ſhocking indecency* of having made preparations for a ball two months only after the death of the unfortunate earl, and while his *reſpectable widow*, drowned in tears, was ſtill ſurrounded by *all the ſorrowful paraphernalia of the deepeſt mourning*.

"This is a very common ſort of narrative," ſaid I to my lord; "I expected it; for thus it is that facts are related and miſrepreſented in the world. But is it poſſible that this ſort of intelligence, of which you have ſo long known the licentiouſneſs and falſehood, can have made ſo ſtrong an impreſſion on you? It is almoſt always dictated by hatred and reſentment, and it is ſufficient to have one enemy in London to be thus calumniated and traduced. But ſince you cannot get the better of a ſenſibility to ſuch attacks, which makes you miſerable,

miſerable, we muſt, at leaſt for a time, quit a reſidence to which nothing ſhould attach you."—"Yes," anſwered he, riſing, and walking about in great agitation, "I will travel: London is become odious to me; I will fly from it, and perhaps for ever." I encouraged him in this deſign, and it was determined that we ſhould ſet off for France in a fortnight. Our converſation was interrupted by a ſervant, who told us that lord Selden, who had juſt arrived from Ireland, wiſhed to ſee me alone. I could not hear the name of the unfortunate earl's moſt intimate friend without emotion; I went to my own apartment directly, and lord Selden was introduced. "I come, madam," ſaid he, "to acquit myſelf of a duty, and to communicate to you the affecting letter of an unfortunate man, who, in his laſt moments, thought only of you. The man to whom it was entruſted came to London firſt in ſearch of me, where I was not at that time; afterwards,

 having

having received wrong information, he went to my uncle's in Yorkſhire; but he was not able to find me for two months: I immediately left every thing to come to London without delay, to execute, punctually and zealouſly, the laſt commands of a friend ſo dear to me." After ſaying this, he gave me the earl's letter. I opened it with a trembling hand: it was dated the day of his death, and was as follows:

'My worthy friend,

'You know that my health has been a 'long time totally ruined; afflicted with an 'incurable diſeaſe, and feeling on a ſudden 'inſupportable pain, I have taken a 'draught which appeared to me the only 'proper remedy for my diſorder. I ap-'pear to be getting worſe, and believe I 'am near my end. If I do not miſtake, 'my death, which will appear very ſud-'den, will give riſe to many falſe ſtories, 'and perhaps envy and malice will at-

'tempt

'tempt to take advantage of it to tarnish 'the reputation of a most interesting and 'respectable woman: you will readily 'imagine I mean lady Clarendon. If it 'should be so, I commit to you, my friend, 'the charge of refuting the calumnies of 'which she may be the object: on the 'borders of the grave I declare that 'angelic woman, faithful to her husband 'and all her duties, has continued pure 'and irreproachable, notwithstanding the 'injustice of her family and the world. 'Virtuous Selden, be her defender; pub-'lish this letter, and distribute copies of 'it. Be the protector, and, if necessary, 'the avenger of insulted innocence and 'the most sublime virtue persecuted by 'hatred. This is what I expect of you, 'and it is the hope of this which affords 'me comfort.

'I send you my sword: it has well served 'my country and friendship; and I think 'I add to it honour by putting it into your 'hands. Farewell; preserve, dear Sel-

'den, that prudence which has always 'protected you against the dangerous 'fallies of an inflamed imagination. 'Wifdom and happinefs are the precious 'fruits of moderation. A violent enthu-'fiafm, prolonged for any time, let the 'fubject be what it may, is an unnatural 'ftate, and nothing but errors and def-'perate refolutions can be the refult.

'My will has been in your hands thefe 'four years: if there fhould be any ne-'ceffity, you will not forget to fummon 'the four witneffes who faw me fign it.'

I read this letter twice; for my diftrefs and my fears at firft prevented me from underftanding it. Lord Selden told me he had already inferted it in the papers, and fhould diftribute a great many copies. He afterwards fpoke of lord Elby's will. "It cannot be contefted," he faid, "for it has been made feveral years: the earl wrote it a fhort time after Barleton's death. He has appointed me his executor, and it is a painful

painful duty to difcharge. The will will be confidered as rather fingular, and fo indeed it is. The earl, if I may may fay fo, difinherits his only fon; at leaft he deprives him of all he has in his power to alienate: he is prevented, by ancient fettlements in the family, from leaving away from him the fine eftate in Suffolk; but he has devifed away the reft, which is more than half of his large fortune; and has given this immenfe inheritance to a diftant relation, whom he neither loved nor efteemed, of whom, indeed, he had fome reafon to complain."—"Is not this relation," I replied, "the legal heir to thefe eftates if the earl had had no children?"—"It is true he is," anfwered his lordfhip; "but the earl has left a fon, who, from his youth, cannot have difobliged his father."—"Ah! my lord," faid I, "let us not accufe the dead, who cannot anfwer us, nor defend themfelves, when we are not thoroughly acquainted with all the circumftances of the cafe. The earl was a man of prin-

ciple and honour: let us be persuaded he believed he was acting equitably." It was so, in fact; but as lord Selden foresaw, this will filled the whole world with indignation, they lamented pathetically the fate of the virtuous mother and interesting child; and the unfortunate earl was universally condemned as a most unnatural father and a most ungrateful husband.

Lord Selden left me a copy of the earl's letter, which I carried to lord Clarendon, to whom this writing gave the most exquisite delight; for he doubted not but it would be sufficient to clear my character. He was mistaken: the letter came too late, and did not obliterate the first impression made by calumny. When we imagine we do honour to our principles by declaiming against unfortunate persons, who are accused only on hearsay, we do not easily cast off our prejudices; for then, instead of boasting of a virtuous indignation, we are obliged to confess we were wrong and unjust. Thus the earl's letter changed

changed the opinion of very few: all the reſt pretended that it only proved the inconceivable exceſs of the earl's paſſion, and his generoſity towards me. Many people aſſerted that the letter was a forgery fabricated between lord Selden, lord Clarendon, and myſelf. Lord Selden conducted himſelf with equal zeal and rectitude, and ſpared no trouble to convince the world of my innocence: the only reſult was, that no one dared attack my character in his preſence, but elſewhere, my perſonal enemies, irritated by lord Elby's will, and his laſt letter, ſo honourable to me, were only the more enraged, and the more zealous in their attempts to injure me. Lord Clarendon, compelled to renounce thoſe hopes he had embraced with tranſport, was again plunged into a profound melancholy, which excited in my mind reflections of the moſt afflicting nature. It was undoubtedly natural that he ſhould be deeply affected by the con-

tempt with which I was treated: I had felt in the ſame manner for him, and could therefore eaſily conceive his pain. But I had too much reaſon to believe that he was ſtill more ſenſible to the perſonal ridicule caſt on himſelf, and to the loſs of an agreeable ſociety, though he had never really loved any one of the perſons who compoſed it. He had given me up without deſpair, without even ſuffering in his health; and I now ſaw him moſt violently afflicted at a circumſtance infinitely leſs painful. After this compariſon, it was impoſſible for me not to attribute to vanity, emotions of which it was ſo pleaſing to conſider myſelf the ſole cauſe. It is generally ſaid, that perſons of cold characters are the happieſt, ſince they cannot experience thoſe keen pangs which proceed from great ſenſibility; but this is a miſtake. The more incapable of a ſtrong attachment, ſo much the more ſelfiſh are we; and our ſelf-love gives us exquiſite

pain, which no human consolation can alleviate. We blush at our affliction, and we are thus deprived of that last resource of the unfortunate, the capacity of revealing our misfortunes, and of alleviating them by the communication. In the midst of the greatest enjoyments, the cold hearted man is never satisfied; as insatiable as he is unreasonable, he has still some desires to gratify; he is envious even though eminently successful; while a single moment recompences the feeling mind for whole years of suffering.

In the midst of these reflections, I was busily employed in the preparations for our departure, which I hastened with great earnestness; when on a sudden lord Clarendon appeared to dislike the project, and told me he did not think his health would permit him to take so long a journey; in fact, he was terribly altered, and excessively weak. My alarms were renewed, and alas! were but too well-

 founded.

founded. I ſent once more for his phyſician, whom, in ſpite of my intreaties to the contrary, he had diſmiſſed for ſome time. The neceſſity for conſulting him once more filled me with terror, and left in my mind a cruel preſentiment which never ceaſed to diſtreſs me. The phyſician whom I privately interrogated, anſwered at firſt with embarraſſment, and in an obſcure manner, but being cloſely preſſed, he ſaid, he feared that lord Clarendon's lungs were diſeaſed; and that he already had the ſymptoms of a conſumption. He added, that he could preſcribe no other remedies than a regular and moderate regimen, together with the country air. This was ſufficient for me; I no longer flattered myſelf with the ſmalleſt hope. I beheld lord Clarendon attacked by a mortal complaint; I gave myſelf up to all that deſpair which ſo dreadful a certainty was calculated to inſpire; the neceſſity of concealing my juſt affliction, rendered

rendered it, if poſſible, ſtill more diſtreſſing and intolerable. It had been determined that we ſhould live in lord Clarendon's country-houſe; but the day before that fixed on for our departure, he informed me he wiſhed to remove to a greater diſtance from London, and would go into Derbyſhire. I oppoſed this plan with all my power, but nothing could prevail on him to relinquiſh the deſign. I then ſecretly engaged the phyſician to follow us, and ſucceeded; but as his lordſhip did not imagine he was ſo ill as to require his attendance, we invented ſeveral pretences to remove from his mind any uneaſineſs on that account. We arrived in Derbyſhire in the beginning of April. Lord Clarendon, notwithſtanding his languour and indiſpoſition, appeared much pleaſed at being in a place which had formerly been ſo dear to him. He was much moved at the ſight of the cloſet, the affecting monument of love and happineſs,

pinefs. Notwithftanding his weaknefs, he refolved to make a vifit to the little pavilion in the wood; we went thither alone. More than once during the walk, I obferved him turn pale, and his countenance changed feveral times; he could fcarcely fupport himfelf; I endeavoured in vain to prevail on him to return to the houfe; he leaned on my arm, and not being able to reach the pavilion, we ftopped half way, and fat down under a tree on which I had written thofe lines from Shakefpeare:

——I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A ftill and quiet confcience.

Lord Clarendon read thefe verfes, and regarding me with tendernefs, faid, "This then is the place where you at length found tranquillity; here I was forgotten!" .... This kind of reproach, fo delicate and fo mild, affected me in an extraordinary

dinary degree. I felt at that moment, that I loved him more than ever. To this paſſionate emotion, I joined the horrible idea, which perhaps rendered him ſtill more dear, that probably I approached the dreadful moment when I ſhould loſe him for ever. My fortitude and reaſon forſook me entirely, I could neither reſtrain my feelings nor reply, but burſt into tears. His ſurpriſe was extreme. I ſought for pretexts to conceal my real motives, but was ſo little myſelf, that every reaſon I aſſigned betrayed the more ſtrongly my confuſion and deſpair. Lord Clarendon knew me ſo well, that it was not eaſy to deceive him. He ſaw that my mind was deeply affected, and knew that one object alone could ſo forcibly occupy it. My tenderneſs had betrayed my grief; he recollected a thouſand circumſtances which had not ſtruck him before, and this firſt ray of light diſcovered to him almoſt completely the diſtreſſing

diſtreſſing and fatal truth. He, however, diſſembled, appeared to believe me, and changed the ſubject. While he was ſpeaking, I remarked that the ſky ſuddenly became cloudy, and rain began to fall. We began to return to the houſe; but the increaſed violence of the wind forced lord Clarendon to ſtop at the end of fifty yards: he ſat down on a graſſy hillock under an oak. The trees protected us from the rain for ſome minutes, but ſoon the water fell in torrents from the branches agitated by the wind, and the exceſſive cold penetrated and almoſt froze us. I cannot recollect without ſhuddering, what I ſuffered in this dreadful ſituation, in which every thing that could be dangerous to lord Clarendon in his condition was united; and which perhaps haſtened the termination of his life. Diſtreſſed and in deſpair I covered him with my cloak and gown, and folding him in my arms, my head reclining on his ſhoulder, I endea-

voured

voured to conceal my face which was bathed in tears. He ſuffered much, but did not dare to complain. I felt the violent motions of his cheſt againſt my heart; his body was agitated by an univerſal ſhivering; he ſaid to me in a low voice, "This moment has charms for me; it would be pleaſant to die thus." I anſwered only with ſobs which I could not ſtifle. At length the ſtorm abated; and at the ſame time the phyſician came in a carriage to our aſſiſtance. Lord Clarendon, on his arrival at the houſe, found himſelf ſo ill that he was obliged to go to bed. Towards evening he appeared better, and roſe the next day at his uſual hour.

Every moment after this fatal day increaſed his danger; and I eaſily collected from converſation with the phyſician, that there was no longer any hope. Lord Clarendon, more than once gave me to underſtand he was aware of his ſituation; and this diſcovery completed my diſtreſs. I ſaw that

that he avoided every thing which might affect him; the unfortunate man dreaded too tender a farewell, which would undoubtedly have augmented his regret. I could not speak to him, even of the most indifferent circumstances, without tears in my eyes; when he observed this, he sighed, and was silent. I restrained my tears; I kept silence, but my grief burst forth in spite of me; and the idea that his pain was increased thereby, tended to heighten it. One evening when we were alone, after a few moments of profound reverie, he said, "I have a favour to ask of you; you must give me a promise which is necessary to my tranquillity. Determined as you were not to make use of lord Elby's letter, you have more than once been tempted to burn it, but I prevented you. Give me your word, that whatever event may happen, you will always preserve it. "I know you," added he, taking hold of one of my hands and pressing it in his; "I know

"I know too well how far your disgust for the world may carry you; and the plan you will perhaps in future form for renouncing it for ever. Remove then an inquietude which torments me; it will be a consolation to me to think that you will always preserve the precious testimony of your innocence and virtue; that it will even survive you; and that if you have disdained to use it, it may still at least justify your memory, and secure it that admiration you are so worthy of inspiring." At these words, feeling I could not reply without shedding a torrent of tears, I contented myself with pressing his hand. "I am now satisfied," he said; "be assured that it is a regard for your happiness that animates me. You are young, and your heart is too feeling a one not to seek one day or other the agreeable consolation of friendship. I leave you that which will justify the affection you no doubt will inspire."—"Ah!" I exclaimed at length, laying

laying my face on his and bathing it with tears, what fatal discourse is this! You rend my heart,—that unfortunate heart which no other than yourself will ever occupy."—"Yes," he replied in a weak and trembling voice, "I have not been sufficiently sensible of my felicity; I have not contributed to yours: this reflection is dreadful."—"Alas," interrupted I, "you will kill me!" I could say no more, my exhausted strength abandoned me; I fell without sense into his arms. I was condemned to see the light again, and to support the misery of life, but at least for a few moments I lost the painful consciousness of an odious existence. When I came to my senses I found myself in my own apartment; I asked for lord Clarendon, and wished to go to him; they prevented me by saying that he was asleep, and the physician had given orders that nobody should disturb him. In about an hour the physician came to me, I was struck

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ſtruck with the alteration I remarked in his countenance; I advanced towards him trembling, and not daring to aſk any queſtions: my looks, wild and diſturbed, ſufficiently painted to him the diſtreſs of my mind, and the dreadful doubts which agitated me. He continued ſilent: at length I aſſumed reſolution enough to ſay in a fearful voice, "Well, lord Clarendon?"—"He is ill, madam; do not flatter yourſelf; he is very ill . . . ."—"What then," cried I, "all is over."—"He ſtill breathes," he replied; "he lives, be aſſured, but . . . . ."—"It is enough," I exclaimed; "alas, I underſtand you! I know my fate! To-morrow, to-morrow, without doubt, perhaps this very night, all my happineſs will be deſtroyed, will be annihilated; there will only remain an eternal and agonizing recollection!" After having uttered the moſt violent expreſſions which grief could dictate, I wiſhed to go to lord Clarendon. The phyſician oppoſed

posed my design with firmness; but seeing that he could not prevent me, he said, "Well then, you force me to wound your feelings: I repeat to you that lord Clarendon still exists; but he has a few hours only to live. Being conscious of his situation, and fearful of his weakness, he has written this paper, which he requested me to give you . . . . . ."—"O, heaven," I interrupted, "he writes to me!" At these words I took the fatal and affecting note, and threw myself on my knees to read it. That note, which I always carry about me; and which, placed next my heart, will follow me to the grave, contained these words:

'Let me die with fortitude if possible. 'Come not to me I beseech you; I require your obedience in this. Your 'beloved presence will only irritate my 'feelings and my regret. I must renounce 'life, happiness, and you. I pity you, 'that is the last sentiment of my heart.'

As

As I peruſed this writing, my hand trembled, my eyes grew dim, and my heart was rent with grief. How was I able to receive it without dying on the ſpot? Reſpecting theſe wiſhes which were ſacred in my eyes, I conſented not to enter lord Clarendon's chamber, but I reſolved to paſs the night in an adjoining cloſet; this the phyſician oppoſed: "Recollect," he ſaid, "that his lordſhip is in his perfect ſenſes; can you, when ſo near him, reſtrain a ſorrow which has ſo often betrayed you. Your tears, your involuntary groans will reach him, and you will afflict his mind with anxiety and deſpair. I yielded to theſe reaſons: the phyſician returned to lord Clarendon, and I remained alone in my chamber. I did not go to reſt, but ſat upon a couch which ſtood oppoſite lord Clarendon's portrait, with my eyes fixed on his beloved image. I paſſed ſome hours in this ſituation without ſhedding a tear, motionleſs and cold,

equally incapable of thought and reflection, but in a ſtate of oppreſſion of mind more terrible perhaps than that of violent grief, in which at leaſt we may utter complaints and groans, and form a thouſand wild projects, but which, dictated by ſorrow, afford the only conſolation it is capable of receiving. Abſorbed and almoſt annihilated, the exhauſtion of my ſtrength, the total loſs of all ideas, by depriving me of every kind of reflection, ſeemed to give me up entirely to that ſorrowful impreſſion, that deep wound which rent my heart. My imagination was extinguiſhed; neither the paſt nor future preſented themſelves to my mind; no idea was mixed with the ſingle thought which was always before me, *he is dying*. Thus, in a dreadful agony, deprived of reaſon, ſpeech, and motion, without ideas to divert our attention, we the more diſtinctly perceive thoſe evils which almoſt deprive us of life, and we exiſt only to ſuffer.

About

About five in the morning, a mournful lamp which was the only light in the room, was ſuddenly extinguiſhed: grief is almoſt always ſuperſtitious; this frivolous incident overwhelmed me with terror, and rouſing me from my deep lethargy, filled my troubled imagination with fantaſtic and dreadful images. A cold ſweat bedewed my face, while a conſuming fire ſeemed lighted up in my veins; I at once ſhuddered and burned. The violence with which my blood flowed, formed in my head a confuſed noiſe, and deluſive ſounds, like low and hollow groans. My eyes, heavy and overpowered by terror, beheld through the darkneſs which ſurrounded me a melancholy train of dreadful images alternately appear and vaniſh. In the midſt of theſe vague, fugitive, and deadly ſpectres, one alone, more cruel than the others, ſeemed fixed near me. I diſcovered the ſad remains of the unfortunate object of this frightful delirium, on a bed of ſorrow

and a prey to death. I contemplated him inanimate and disfigured without emotion; I was by his bed-ſide, I touched him! My hair ſtood an end. A deadly and inſupportable weight, while it rent and oppreſſed my heart, deprived me of the power of eſcaping from this dreadful ſpectacle. I could neither fly nor relieve myſelf, nor call for aſſiſtance! Terrible ſituation! like that harraſſing ſtate in which, half aſleep and tormented by a horrible dream, we in vain ſtrive againſt ſleep, and make painful and fruitleſs efforts to awake. But, alas! the moſt fatal deluſions depicted only my fate, and when awake, I was to feel ſtill greater ſhocks than in the dream. The firſt rays of the morning diſſipated the black phantoms of the night. I roſe from the couch, and half opened the chamber door with the intention of inquiring after lord Clarendon, but a ſecret dread reſtrained me. I was going perhaps to obtain certain know-

ledge

ledge of the eternal misery of my life. This notion, although confused, made me hastily shut the door, and return to my apartment. I went up to the clock, and found it was three quarters past six. This clock was placed close to lord Clarendon's portrait: while I was considering the second-hand, which moved with rapidity, I felt a sensation which it is impossible to describe: it seemed as if the hand in each revolution carried away with it a portion of my existence; in proportion as my eye followed its quick and fatal motions, my heart sunk within me. At length, fixing my eyes on the portrait, I exclaimed, "Time flies without return, and perhaps a few minutes more will deprive me for ever of the feeble remains of my happiness and hopes." At these words, a torrent of tears deprived me of speech. I hastened from the portrait; that too-beloved object, the sight of which I could not endure! I invoked heaven, I prostrated

trated myſelf, and dared to aſk a miracle: Alas, I was not worthy of obtaining it. Diſtracted with grief, dejected, and alarmed, I had no hopes, and I prayed without fervour. Towards eight o'clock I heard footſteps near my room; they ceaſed at my door: I trembled, and kept the moſt profound ſilence. I diſtinguiſhed the phyſician's voice; he was ſpeaking in a low tone to my women. After a ſhort time he went away; at the end of a quarter of an hour he returned, and gently knocked at the door; I did not anſwer; I too well underſtood what theſe movements meant; but yet determined, at leaſt once more, to endeavour to deceive myſelf. At nine my door opened, and the phyſician entered; my ſentence was written on his countenance; but with an inconceivable weakneſs, I was deſirous he ſhould ſtill deceive me, and ſaid to him in a broken voice, which contradicted my words, "You come not, undoubtedly, to deprive me of life; I ſhould not ſee you

if

if you had no hopes." His eyes were filled with tears; I turned aside my head to conceal my own; but dreadful convulsions agitating my person, divulged my despair. He approached and said, "Your carriage is ready, my lady, we must quit this place."—"Leave me," I said, pushing him forcibly away; "nothing shall drag me hence." At these words, he exclaimed, sorrowfully, "O Heavens! do you not understand me. You have lost every thing, madam, lord Clarendon is no more." Alas, I knew it too well; but these terrible words, *lord Clarendon is no more*, this formal and irrevocable sentence, which at length distinctly struck my eyes, completed the agony of my soul. Time will never efface from my memory the horrible impression of these fatal words; I still think I hear them pronounced, and still hear them resounding in my ears. I shall rapidly pass over what remains to be told; the history of my life should end at this fatal epoch.

epoch. The phyſician, led by the moſt faithful attachment to me, hurried me from a place in which I ſhould moſt undoubtedly have found my death. I was carried inſenſible and motionleſs to a carriage, which immediately took the road to London. About ſixty miles from that city I fell dangerouſly ill, and remained at an inn, between life and death, for three weeks. The phyſician watched over me, inceſſantly, and brought me back from the gates of death. Yet his ſkill could not ſave lord Clarendon; alas, he was deſtined to be only uſeleſs or fatal to me. At length I once more beheld London, and firmly reſolved to remain there no longer than was neceſſary for the arrangement of my affairs, to enable me to put in execution the project I had ſo long meditated. My enemies were more zealous than ever; they circulated againſt me the blackeſt and moſt atrocious calumnies. Lord Clarendon's laſt wiſhes gave the finiſhing

finiſhing ſtroke to their hatred; his will regarded me alone, ſpoke only of me. It contained theſe words:

'I give all my eſtates, and every thing I
'poſſeſs, without exception, to the moſt
'reſpectable of women, my wife lady Cla-
'rendon. She conſtituted my happineſs,
'while living, I can do nothing for her's
'after my death. I can only ſatisfy my
'own feelings by this laſt but feeble teſti-
'mony of my eſteem and gratitude.'

He made this will eight days only before his death. His heirs, diſappointed in their avaricious expectations, gave looſe to the moſt violent acrimony againſt me. Lady Nevill and the Counteſs of Elby took the lead in calumniating and abuſing me. Supported by their friends, they ſucceeded in confirming the public in the opinion that I was a vile monſter, whoſe actions had been ſolely guided by ſelf-intereſt, impoſ-

ture, and treachery. Exerting myſelf with great diligence in the arrangement of my affairs, I ſoon completed their ſettlement. I then wrote to lady Nevill, whom I requeſted to come to me on the morrow, as I had things of the greateſt importance to communicate to her: I ſent a circular letter of the ſame tendency to all lord Clarendon's relations, except lady Elby, who was the only one I did not invite; I will explain the reaſons hereafter. Nobody failed to come to the meeting. As ſoon as they were all aſſembled in the drawing-room, I was informed of their arrival; I went down, accompanied by my attorney, and the worthy and virtuous phyſician of whom I have ſpoken ſo often before. The agitation which an extraordinary reſolution always cauſes, the numerous aſſembly, the mournful habits, and the appearance of woe, excited a diſorder and emotion in me, from which I could ſcarcely recover myſelf. At length I ſat down, and laying

on

on the table the papers I had in my hand, I ordered the doors to be opened, and all who belonged to lord Clarendon to come in; immediately all his people appeared, and ranged themſelves behind our chairs. This ſingular ſcene cauſed the greateſt ſurpriſe, and the concluſion was expected with impatience and curioſity, when I began to ſpeak nearly in the following words: "After the loſs I have experienced, I have only one duty to fulfil, and one deſire to form. I ought now only to bewail the loſs of my friend, my benefactor, and my huſband; the loſs of him who braved the public opinion on my account, and who made ſtill greater ſacrifices when he broke through the dear ties which attached him to his family. The only deſire which I have now remaining, is that of juſtifying his memory, and this I can only do by proving my own innocence. When accuſed by calumny, I had the good fortune to clear myſelf to lord Clarendon; honour and humanity equally forbad our producing

the evidence; but lord Clarendon endeavoured, by the moſt ſolemn oaths, and the moſt affecting intreaties, to ſecure for me: ſupporters in his family, and protectors among his friends. They however did not eſteem him enough to believe him; they did not love him ſufficiently to lament his miſery. He was deſerted. Malice and hatred baniſhed him from London; reſentment and ſorrow have perhaps haſtened the period of his life. He had courage enough to deſpiſe the unjuſt prejudice of the public; he had too much ſenſibility to be able to forget the ungrateful beings on whom he relied. I alone remained with him; his laſt thoughts were employed only on me. He has made me his ſole heireſs, to the prejudice of his relations; he was perfectly ſatisfied with my conduct, but was compelled to cenſure theirs; he meant, perhaps, to puniſh by diſinheriting them; but he eſteemed me too much to imagine that this vengeance would gratify me. I know it has been thought and declared

clared that ſordid ſelf-intereſt was the ſole motive of my conduct: by proving that I have been unfairly condemned on that point, I almoſt entirely manifeſt my innocence on every other. Deſpiſing wealth, which is uſeleſs to me, you ſhall ſee the uſe I will make of it: I ſhall reſerve none of the property for myſelf, but ſhall be contented with the moderate ſum which ariſes from the broken remains of my father's fortune. I requeſt the virtuous man who was ſo careful of him, and who was at once his phyſician and his friend, to accept his country-houſe near London, and I give up the remainder of his fortune to his natural heirs, with the exception only of lady Elby and her ſon, whom I do not comprehend in this donation. If my offers are not accepted this evening, I have purchaſers ready, and to-morrow will ſell lord Clarendon's eſtates, and with their produce will enrich the London hoſpitals. This is my irrevocable determination.

Vanity has not ſuggeſted it; I ſhall not enjoy the reputation it may acquire, as I am leaving England for ever: I abandon without regret a country in which I have found neither relations, conſolation, nor pity; I am going under a feigned name into a foreign country to dedicate myſelf to obſcurity, which is alone ſuitable to my ſorrow! There I ſhall forget London and my enemies, and ſhall only preſerve the inextinguiſhable memory of the beſt of men, and moſt beloved of huſbands."

As I finiſhed this diſcourſe, I roſe and approaching lady Bolton and lady Nevill; "There," ſaid I, as I preſented them the papers, "is the donation of all my eſtates; it is executed in the proper forms; I give them to you, and at preſent aſk for no anſwer; I will receive it this evening, and flatter myſelf it will not be dictated by falſe pride or ancient reſentment." At theſe words, I hurried out of the room, and went and ſhut myſelf in my own chamber,

leaving the whole aſſembly in an aſtoniſhment, which permitted no one to interrupt or anſwer me. After ſome ſlight and trivial objections, they accepted all my offers, aſſuring me that maternal tenderneſs alone was the inducement. This tranſaction made a great noiſe in London. My diſintereſted conduct was called romantic folly, dictated by pride; and the excluſion of lady Elby was univerſally condemned as an injuſtice, and the effect of a criminal hatred. I confeſs, that having foreſeen this judgment, I had been tempted to give lady Elby a ſhare of her brother's fortune; but probity prevented me. I knew the illegitimacy of her ſon, and I thought I owed it to the memory of the unfortunate lord Elby, to conduct myſelf on this occaſion according to the principles he had adopted. To finiſh all I have to ſay relative to lady Elby, I ſhall add, that this woman, ſo much admired and praiſed, loſt on a ſudden all her conſequence a ſhort time after I left

left England. A pregnancy of ſix months compelled her to declare her marriage, which had hitherto been kept ſecret, with a young man, devoid of morals and fortune, to whom ſhe had given her hand in the eighth month of her widowhood: at the end of ſix weeks ſhe was delivered of a dead child, which ſhe ſurvived but a few days, and the ſon, whom ſhe left, died about three months ſince.

All my affairs being ſettled, I prepared to quit England for ever. I diſmiſſed my women and all my domeſtics, except Thomſon, who would not quit me; I determined to depart ſecretly and without delay. I fixed the hour of my departure, and the evening before ſettled with my ſervants, and thoſe of lord Clarendon: their tears and their farewell affected me much; they all quitted my houſe, and I was left alone with Thomſon. He prepared ſupper, which I did not touch: I felt a kind of oppreſſion to which I was unaccuſtomed;

cuſtomed; my grief was leſs tender than violent. At ten I ſent away Thomſon, telling him to call me before day-break. He ſighed and ſaid, "Who will undreſs your ladyſhip this evening."—"Myſelf," I anſwered.—"Good God!" replied he, lifting up his eyes to heaven, "lady Clarendon without a ſingle woman to attend her!"—"Thomſon," ſaid I, "there is no longer room for pomp and grandeur; you know I have renounced thoſe vain chimeras." While I uttered theſe words, I attempted to ſmile, but I felt that my eyes were filled with tears. Thomſon went out. When I found myſelf completely alone, I experienced a kind of terror, which for a moment rendered me motionleſs: I looked round with aſtoniſhment; the ſight of the large and ſumptuous apartment, which no longer belonged to me; the magnificence of the furniture, made on me a new and diſagreeable impreſſion. I undreſſed ſlowly, and in great per-

perturbation; but being ſo long accuſtomed to grief, theſe various emotions neither ſurpriſed nor alarmed me. I went to bed very late, and at three in the morning Thomſon knocked at my door and waked me. I roſe, and haſtily dreſſing myſelf, went down immediately, leaning on Thomſon's arm, who carried a light. I walked ſlowly, and perceiving that he wept, I ſtopped, and ſaid with emotion, "What Thomſon, you repent that you wiſhed to follow me; you may ſtill remain if you pleaſe."—"Alas, madam," he replied, "this deſerted houſe, this flight in the middle of the night, this change of fortune, every thing aſtoniſhes me. I care not for myſelf; but will you never repent, my lady?" This laſt queſtion confounded me; during the enthuſiaſm which had directed me, this notion of repentance had never occurred to my mind, and at this moment of diſtreſs, theſe words of Thomſon's, ſimple as they were, excited an inexplicable

explicable feeling of anxiety and diſtreſs: we were on the ſteps of the hall-door, ready to deſcend into the court-yard: "Go," ſaid I to Thomſon, "open the gates, and bring in the carriage, I will wait for you here." He immediately went away, and I was alone: I turned round, and contemplating by the light of the moon the front of the houſe, I ſaid, "In two hours this deſerted houſe will be filled by lord Clarendon's greedy heirs .... by my enemies. They will ſpeak of me for the ſole purpoſe of detracting from the merit of the ſacrifice I have made, or perhaps of ſlandering or calumniating me ſtill more. Every thing which ſurrounds me is ſtrange to me. I am going to unknown regions, bearing with me ſorrowful recollections, to paſs my exiſtence in obſcurity and miſery. This is the lot I have choſen." As I ſpoke thus, I felt the tears run down my cheeks: ſurpriſed at experiencing ſenſations of which I thought

myſelf

myſelf incapable, I exclaimed, "O heaven! theſe then are the thoughts and the regret which occupy and afflict me, on leaving London: I leave there lord Clarendon's aſhes; and already I repent what I have done! What, ſhall I be at once vain and vindictive?" At this inſtant Thomſon returned with the carriage; I went into it with an affliction of heart, the more painful, as I reproached myſelf vehemently for the unworthy cauſe of it, and as I yielded to this weakneſs with ſhame. There was ſuch a confuſion in my ideas, that I could not clearly aſcertain the nature of the feelings of my heart; and beſides, I dreaded to ſcrutinize them, and know that the moſt diſtreſſing and humiliating affliction is that of fearing and doubting ourſelves.

Lord Clarendon's aſhes were tranſported to the tomb of his fathers, and lie at a ſmall diſtance from London in a monument which I had cauſed to be built. I was driven

driven thither. We arrived before day-break. I had previously sent to the sexton, and he was waiting for me. He opened the gates, and I entered alone the dark and gloomy place: the mournful light of a single lamp was my guide; I perceived the monument which held all that was dear to me! I prostrated myself on the marble. It was in that place I wished to recollect myself and consult my heart. I exclaimed, "O thou, whom I dared flatter myself I loved beyond comparison, am I still worthy of that perfect and precious esteem which was this last sentiment for me? If thou didst not deceive thyself, the sacrifices I have made to thy memory should have consoled this unhappy heart; and if ever I felt culpable regret, I merit neither thy kindness nor thy affection. But;" pursued I, "if I could live again in the world in splendor, justified and esteemed, should I wish to return to it? Would the frivolous incense of vain adulation make me

me forget all I have loſt, or would it render a ſlavery and conſtraint ſupportable, which were burthenſome to me even during the time of my felicity?" I ſtopped here, and in the ſilence of retirement, I examined my heart, and penetrated into its inmoſt folds. In proportion as I developed its ſecret ſentiments, the falſe terror which had diſturbed me diſperſed like a vain dream; I recovered at once my reaſon and my courage; and freed from the degradation of an injurious fear, I no longer bluſhed, except for having for a moment forgotten myſelf. When I felt my mind entirely recovered, my thoughts were no longer occupied but with the fatal object which was before my eyes. The firſt tranſports of my grief returned with more force than ever. My imagination was heated and wild. It ſuggeſted the idea of a new ſacrifice, which I made with rapture before I tore myſelf from this fatal ſpot. I inſcribed on the tomb with the point of a knife

knife the following words, which have been ſince engraven on it in letters of gold by the orders of lord Selden:

'I was able to contemplate this tomb
'without dying; but I depoſe and leave here
'every thing which I have now remaining,
'an odious and fatal liberty! Yes, in this
'temple, conſecrated by piety, I bind my-
'ſelf by every thing that religion and ten-
'derneſs render the moſt inviolable, never
'to enter into another engagement. Every
'thing changes and is deſtroyed! If it be
'poſſible that time may triumph over my
'ſorrow, this marble at leaſt will ſurvive
'me, and I engrave on it a ſacred oath
'which cannot be effaced.'

At this paſſage of lady Clarendon's hiſtory, Sainville let the manuſcript fall on the table, and remained motionleſs a few minutes, as if thunderſtruck. Then riſing impetuouſly, and haſtily walking up and down

down the room, exclaimed, “ All is over, there is no hope for me! and yet this fatal ſtory has completed my intoxication and my ruin. O heaven! into what an abyſs am I precipitated.” As he ſpoke theſe words, he threw himſelf on a couch, and remained more than half an hour plunged in the moſt profound melancholy. At length turning towards and caſting his eyes on the manuſcript, he ſaw on it the marks of the tears he had more than once ſhed on it during the peruſal: “ Ah!” ſaid he, “ how ſweet were the tears I have ſhed! I had then ſome hope! . . .” He took up the manuſcript once more, and continuing the peruſal, read as follows:

I quitted London without delay; I croſſed the ſea and went through Switzerland into Italy. Long journeys, the diſſipation which neceſſarily follows a continual ſucceſſion of new and curious objects, uſeful reflections at length entirely re-eſtabliſhed the tranquillity of my ſoul.

Being

Being determined to ſettle in France, I came into this province, and bought the ſmall farm I now poſſeſs; I am aſſured that the proprietor of the eſtate will never return to it, ſo that no trouble now diſturbs my repoſe.

The firſt months I paſſed in this ſolitude, were ſpent in the moſt ſorrowful manner. Fatigued by my journeys, and eſpecially by the multitude of new acquaintances and momentary connections one is obliged to form in foreign countries, if we wiſh to gain information, I had entertained the moſt charming notion of the project of dedicating myſelf to complete retirement, and arrived here fully perſuaded that I was going to experience the moſt perfect tranquillity. I felt no languor, I had for ſome time regained the reliſh and habit of employment, but I once more was diſturbed by the recollections which the diſtraction cauſed by travelling had almoſt effaced from my memory. Theſe recol-

lections gaining ſtrength every day, brought back almoſt all together the ſorrows I had ſucceſſively experienced in my life. Being always alone, and not even for a moment enjoying the neceſſary relaxation of converſation; the preſent and the future offering only to my imagination a monotonous and uniform repetition of thoſe events, of which every day of my life preſented a complete picture; my ideas naturally reverted to the paſt, and there I found only ſubjects of regret and repentance. My thoughts carried me back even to the days of infancy; I wept once more for the loſs of my mother, as if ſhe had been taken from me only a ſhort time. I felt how uſeful her affection and advice would have been to me, and from what misfortunes they would have preſerved me. I recollected with chagrin the particulars of my conduct to lord Clarendon, and to my diſtracting grief for his death was united the dreadful remorſe for having been the cauſe;

caufe; for I could not diffemble that I fhould have conftituted his happinefs, if my character had been more rational, and my feelings more moderate; and that then he would not have been the victim of that forrow which brought him to the grave. In the midft of thefe harraffing reflections, the remembrance of lord Elby troubled and afflicted me. Not only did I reproach myfelf for his death, but I regretted him as the only perfon capable of affording me confolation. He alone in the univerfe could have felt for me a compaffion proportionate to my misfortunes! This idea made his memory interefting and dear to me: it ftruck me fo forcibly, that I could not think of him but with extreme emotion and real grief. I forgot his errors, I recollected only the delicacy and generofity of his fentiments, and the energy of his foul. I repeated frequently: he loved as I was capable of loving. If he were living, there would ftill be an heart

that would comprehend mine; and were he even at a diſtance from me, or at the other extremity of the world, I ſhould not be alone in the univerſe. I read over again his laſt letter, and diſcovered ſeveral paſſages which affected me ſo ſtrongly, that it ſeemed I was reading them for the firſt time; that paſſage eſpecially, in which he deſcribes the joy he felt when he ſaw the ſhadow of my head in the cloſet . . . I thought that ſuch a ſenſation could only have been felt by a woman.

Perſecuted by theſe reflections, and diſtreſſed by ſuperfluous regret, I learned that in an abſolute ſolitude, there is no agreeable recollection except of the good we have done; then we paſs judgment on our paſt actions, as piety will judge of them in the hour of death; and who can ſupport this ſevere examination? I felt that virtue alone could baniſh the melancholy to which I was a prey, and that the only mode of diſſipating vexatious reflections

was

was to endeavour to acquire comforters for the future: I ſought the unfortunate; they are eaſily found on an eſtate abandoned a long time by its proprietor: I forgot my own misfortunes in relieving their diſtreſſes, and by degrees I have been enabled to enjoy a tranquillity independent of events, and which it is not in the power of man ever to change or deſtroy.

Sainville, after having finiſhed the peruſal of lady Clarendon's hiſtory, ſeeing it was broad day, left his apartment and went into the garden. At ſix he awoke the baron, and went into his chamber. He ſat down by the ſide of his friend's bed, and being preſſed to open his heart to him, he began by confiding to him the real name of Conſtance. "What," cried the baron, "is this ſtranger, this unknown, lady Clarendon! I was in London at the time of her retreat, when impoſture and hatred painted her in the blackeſt

blackeſt colours. On my ſecond journey thither, I learned her misfortunes and their conſequence; I heard much of her beauty, her underſtanding, and the noble pride of her character, but her innocence was doubted . . . . ."—" If you will hear me," interrupted Sainville, " inſtead of repeating conjectures formed in London three years back, I could . . . ."—" Ah, my friend!" replied the baron, " ſhe can never prove ſhe did not love lord Elby to diſtraction, and that ſhe was not afterwards through inconceivable caprice the cauſe of his death. She has diſplayed great magnanimity, and unheard-of diſintereſtedneſs, but her moſt ardent admirers are perſuaded that her paſſion for lord Elby . . . . ."—" You are then," exclaimed Sainville, " determined not to hear me . . ."—" One word more," ſaid the baron, " ſhe ſacrificed her fortune, her rank, and ſituation, to prove her innocence; ſhe has enriched her mortal enemies with her ſpoils; and do you believe that if ſhe had poſſeſſed a

poſitive

positive proof of her virtue, she would have hesitated to produce it?"—"The most powerful reasons," said Sainville, "compelled her to conceal the proof . . . . ."—"Ah, that is like you," replied the baron, "and this sentence satisfies you. But can there exist a reason for restraint on such a subject, when the question was the recovery and restoration of a husband's honour, whom she pretended she loved beyond comparison?" The baron, who was not easily stopped when once he began a dissertation, would have carried this much farther if his friend had not appeared much offended. Sainville, at length, obtaining a patient hearing, rapidly related lady Clarendon's history; and taking the manuscript out of his pocket, he read through lord Elby's letter, and enjoyed his friend's astonishment with inexpressible pleasure. "Never," exclaimed the baron, "will I again trust to appearances, and to false reports dictated by envy and malice,

malice, and which form the reputation of persons of celebrity! What! have I myself slandered this angelic woman! have I believed and repeated the falsehoods which calumniated her! Thus it is, that levity can associate us with the atrocity of the wicked! But, my dear Sainville, let us return to your affairs, what are your plans?" —"Ah!" said Sainville, "do I know them myself? I have no hope, I ought to fly from her, but the effort is beyond my courage; besides, it is too late to retreat, absence would not cure me, and what new risk can I run by remaining where I am? I cannot love her more than I do. The history of her life, the perusal of this fatal MS. has completely overpowered my reason, even while it justified the passion I feel. You shall read the writing, and you will think as I do."—"Yes," said the baron, "Constance is, in fact, the most perfect heroine of romance." —"Not at all," replied Sainville, "Con-

stance

ſtance reſembles no heroine of romance, ſhe is not *perfect*, but her very defects ſpring from her virtues, and only make her more intereſting. In ſhort, I ſee in her a mixture of good qualities and imperfections, which is very attractive, becauſe it inceſſantly preſents to our view ſingular and ſtriking contraſts. With a reflecting mind and a comprehenſive underſtanding, ſhe is imprudent and credulous; ſhe has pride, and her character is full of energy; yet ſhe is not haughty, and nothing is more eaſy than to gain an aſcendant over her. The purity of her heart and her extreme delicacy make her feel really humble, not only does ſhe bitterly reproach herſelf with the faults ſhe has committed, but even with thoſe of which ſhe might have been guilty. For example, you will ſee clearly in her hiſtory that ſhe attributes to hazard alone, her eſcape from being ſeduced by lord Elby; and ſhe cannot forgive herſelf for

having consented to the nocturnal rendezvous, which never took place. Thus the purest and most virtuous of women, notwithstanding the innocence of her life, esteems herself only for her remorse, and the sacrifices she regards as expiations." —" Well, my friend," said the baron, " such a character should afford you hope; I am sure lord Elby was not more amiable than you are; and, in consequence, you will have a better chance of success, for your love at least will have nothing revolting in it, and . . . ."—" No," interrupted Sainville, " Constance, who believes herself bound by a sacred vow, may indeed hear my sentiments without indignation, but she would think herself criminal and contemptible for ever, if she should share them. She must be seduced, and that is an art which I am not capable of employing against her."—" What! you the renowned seducer of so many women . . . ."—" But what sort of women? prudes or coquettes?

I never

I never loved; it was then eaſy to put in practice all the artifices which imagination can invent; but when we love to diſtraction, we have ſo little preſence of mind, and are ſo very awkward. Yet lord Elby entertained an enthuſiaſtic paſſion for Conſtance: and it was this very paſſion which prompted ſuch deep ſubtilty. Yes, I confeſs that lord Elby loved to idolatry, but I think I love better than he did. Beſides, recollect he had been long in the habit of diſſimulation with her; he had ſpent two years in ſtudying her character, in hearing without ſpeaking; and was accuſtomed to conſtrain himſelf. Forced by his ſituation to conceal his love, what advantage did not Conſtance's ignorance on the ſubject afford him? She was not on her guard againſt him, and ſo far from fearing, ſhe eſteemed and admired him, and attributed all he did for her to the pureſt of ſentiments. But ſhe has already read my heart, ſhe

diſtruſts me, and will impoſe ſilence on me, or baniſh me, or perhaps fly from me."—" My friend," replied the baron, " expect every thing from time and perſeverance; you ought not to be alarmed at a vain oath; make yourſelf beloved, and be aſſured ſuperſtition will not gain the victory over affection. The important and difficult point is to touch a heart ſtill terrified by the evils it has endured, but I predict, my dear Sainville, that you will ſucceed." This converſation afforded Sainville ſome conſolation; he paſſed the remainder of the morning in reading to his friend the moſt intereſting papers of lady Clarendon's hiſtory; and in the evening, he truſted the baron with the manuſcript and went alone to viſit Conſtance. She received him with an emotion mingled with embarraſſment, and aſked if he had read her manuſcript. " You may be ſure," replied Sainville, " that every word of that writing is already for ever engraven on my me-

mory. But, madam, may I venture to inquire what your intention was when you gave me this proof of your confidence? Did you believe that as I knew you better, I ſhould love you leſs? No, undoubtedly, you only wiſhed to deprive me of every hope, be ſatisfied, I no longer have any; but what a cruel method did you employ! While you inſtruct me that you can never return my love, you increaſe and carry to its height my unfortunate paſſion . . . ."—" This language aſtoniſhes me," ſaid Conſtance: " What! did you not tell me you renounced ſentiments it was impoſſible I could ſhare? I thought I was entruſting my ſecrets to a friend. It is your fate to make only dangerous confidences; but if I promiſed you to love with moderation I deceived you; I repent of it, and . . . ."—" We muſt then ceaſe to ſee each other . . ."—" Is this then your reward for ſincerity?"—" But be not alarmed, madam, I am incapable of attempting

tempting to deceive you; I thought it right to convince you of your error; and this duty being fulfilled, I know how to be ſilent, and you ſhall no longer be importuned by uſeleſs complaints . . . ."—" Do you reckon it nothing to poſſeſs the eſteem and tender regard of the object of your paſſion? If love renders you unjuſt and ungrateful, aſk no farther conſolation from me; you ſpeak of a paſſion unknown to me, I did not feel it in that manner."—' What then," cried Sainville, " you are affected by my ſufferings; I poſſeſs your friendſhip at leaſt; but you have fled from the world, and dedicate yourſelf to ſolitude, you have no other friend: I am the only one; yes, I ought to be contented with ſo happy a lot; but condeſcend to ſay it once again—I am the only object of your regard now in the univerſe?" At theſe words Conſtance bluſhed,' ' I cannot," ſhe ſaid, " promiſe you an excluſive attachment, that would be

be to grant a return under another name, to a paſſion which admits of no diviſion; perhaps I may never have another friend than yourſelf, but my heart will be neither leſs tranquil nor leſs free; and if chance ſhould make me diſcover in another the good qualities I have ſeen in you, I ſhould love him as much as I love you."— "Ah!" replied Sainville, "is this then your notion of friendſhip? I muſt then be for ever miſerable, for if it be poſſible that a day may come in which I ſhall triumph over my fatal paſſion, I ſhall love you in another manner, but ſtill without a rival in my affections; and yet I may perhaps behold another friend ſharing your heart."—"But," interrupted Conſtance, "you are tormenting yourſelf with a chimera; no other but yourſelf will ever be admitted to my ſolitude, love me as I wiſh you, and you need not fear a rival . . . . ."—"But," ſaid Sainville, "I am not the only perſon whoſe viſits you receive, and the baron de

Verceil

Verceil . . . ."—" I had forgotten him," replied lady Clarendon with a blush. Scarcely had she uttered these few words, than she repented of her imprudent simplicity, and wished in vain to correct it. She was only the more embarrassed; luckily, however, for her, the little Georgette entered, and the child's presence afforded a natural pretext for changing the subject. Sainville stayed more than an hour; at length Constance took leave of him, and sent him away much more satisfied than she wished. Sainville now entertained some hope, but not daring to be too confident, he did not speak of it to the baron. He was absent and silent the whole evening, and retired at an early hour. The next morning Constance sent to inform him she wished to speak to him, and requested he would come alone. When he received this message he was with the baron; the latter was rather out of humour, for no confidant ever exacted more than he; and silence, or the appear-

ance of reſerve, ſufficed to give him ſerious pain. Lady Clarendon's meſſage increaſed his diſſatisfaction; "Very well," he ſaid with a ſarcaſtic ſmile, "you made no complaints laſt night to me, you went to reſt before midnight, and this morning you are ſent for, I congratulate you; it ſeems your affairs are in a good train; but I muſt collect it from conjecture; you do not confide too much to your friend when you are proſperous." Sainville, whoſe mind was ſtrongly occupied with other things, ſcarcely anſwered the baron, haſtily quitted him, and went to Conſtance. She received him in her dreſſing-room, and when he caſt his eyes on her, he was ſtruck with the coldneſs and tranquillity of her deportment. Conſtance deſired him to ſit down by her ſide, and immediately began to ſpeak in a firm tone of voice as follows: "I have reflected on our laſt night's converſation, and think that before I have entirely forgotten what paſſed, I

am

am bound to give a frank and circumstantial explanation of my sentiments; this shall be the last conversation on such a subject; listen to me then with attention. I voluntarily, at the age of twenty-two, made a vow, the more sacred, as religion, gratitude, and repentance were the guarantees. I am not deceived with respect to my faults . . . If lord Clarendon had chosen another wife, he would still have been alive. I have been the cause of another unfortunate man's death. My life has been a series of errors, weaknesses, and imprudence; where would be the use of acknowledging, if I did not determine to expiate them? Yes, this is the only object of my heart, that alone can make me support life, and mitigate the horrors of inextinguishable recollections. I repeat it to you, nothing shall compel me to break the oath I took at the foot of the altar, which I have called God to witness, and which I have engraven on

lord

lord Clarendon's tomb. The hand which traced ſuch an engagement is no longer free, and if it dared to ſurrender itſelf, who could receive it without contempt? But independent of this incontrovertible reaſon, is love made for me? For four years I have had but one opinion on the ſubject; I have made no reflection which has not induced me to believe, that the height of miſery for me would be to give myſelf up again to that paſſion over which I have been able to triumph only after ſo many torments and ſtruggles. You are in love for the firſt time, and love as I did; and ſuppoſing I was free and yielded to your love, what return could I offer you? A heart exhauſted by a paſſion equally ſtrong, and which could feel nothing for you it has not already felt for another. If I loved you paſſionately, I ſhould envy you the advantage of loving for the firſt time; I ſhould every moment be afraid that you would ſuſpect

my affection, and the idea that the recollection of lord Clarendon would disturb your happiness, would suffice to embitter mine. In short, if I should unite my fate to yours, should I be able to compensate for all the sacrifices you must make to me? Would you renounce for ever, and without regret, the world, ambition, and glory, to bury yourself in an eternal solitude? No, you ought to fill a nobler station; I have no tie; without name or country, or rank, I am accountable to myself alone for my actions and my conduct; I am an isolated being on the earth. It is not so with you; you have a country, and cannot, without disgrace, break the sacred ties which bind you to her."—"Let me speak in my turn," interrupted Sainville: "What! shall I regret the world? Have I not quitted it, was I not disgusted with it even before I knew you? Reflection and reason brought me to this retreat, and will not love be able to retain me there? Ah! I love; and it is

you

you I love, that is my only anſwer; it is better than all your reaſoning."—" But," replied lady Clarendon, " without cabal or intrigue, and even without wiſhing it, there may perhaps come a time, when you leaſt think of it, when you will be torn from your ſolitude, to occupy a ſituation ſuitable to your talents. . . . ."—" Well, I would refuſe it. . . . ."—" Refuſe it! and why? What would be your motives? Can you avow this without a bluſh? Would you give up the noble hope of being uſeful to your country? No, I would reject this diſgraceful ſacrifice, or rather I am certain you would be incapable of making it. . . ." —" You deceive yourſelf; I wiſh not for your eſteem if it enfeebles the idea you ſhould have of my affection for you; hate me; deſpiſe me; but do juſtice to the only virtue I poſſeſs, that of loving you with ſingular and exceſſive ardour. Beſides, the court grants places of importance, or conſiderable poſts, to thoſe only who

ſolicit them with zeal and perſeverance; I ſhall aſk nothing; thus your ſuppoſition is chimerical, and will never be realized. . . ." —"You cannot, however, prove its impoſſibility, and that is enough to raiſe between us an inſurmountable barrier; what would become of me in that caſe, if my deſtiny were united to yours? I ſhould be under the neceſſity of accompanying you into an unknown country, and of living in a ſtate of grandeur and conſtraint, which at twenty years of age I could not endure in the midſt of my own family, and in my own country. This is what I ſhould ſay if I were at liberty, and theſe reaſons would be invincible; judge then if you ſhould retain the ſhadow of a hope, when the ſolemn and ſacred engagement which binds me, is added to the powerful motives which ſeparates us." At theſe words, Sainville, in deſpair, roſe impetuouſly, and exclaimed, "I ſee all is over; I muſt renounce you! My career is terminated; expect nothing from

from me. Ceafe your offers of a fruitlefs friendfhip, of which I am not even worthy. I will fly from you; you will be the eternal torment of my life. But do not fearch for futile pretexts; I am troublefome and odious to you; thefe are the only obftacles which feparate us." This fpeech offended lady Clarendon extremely. "I feek not pretexts," fhe haughtily anfwered, "I want none. I have fatisfied the gratitude I owe you, by every fentiment you have a right to expect, by efteem, confidence, and friendfhip; hope nothing more: I have given you my reafons, not for the purpofe of your confuting them, but to perfuade and convince you by their folidity that neither time, love, nor perfeverance will obtain from me the facrifice of my moft facred duties, or a return of affection of which my heart is no longer fufceptible."—"It is enough," replied Sainville, befide himfelf: "adieu, madam! I go to reftore you to that folitude and tranquillity which are fo dear

dear to you. Adieu! I am going, I know not where, but I muſt go: I muſt have the courage to leave you, it is neceſſary." He then walked a few ſteps away; but returning towards her, ſaid, in a gentler tone, "Do you, at leaſt, madam, approve of this reſolution. Be my adviſer and my guide. . . . ."—"I think," replied ſhe in a trembling voice, "that an abſence of ſome months . . . ."—"Of ſome months!" he exclaimed; "no, no, if I can reſolve to quit you, it ſhall be for ever. If you command me to fly, you baniſh me, and will never ſee me again. . . . ."—"I command nothing. . . . ."—"Ah! ſpeak; at leaſt give me your advice. . . . ."—"Well, I think the wiſeſt ſtep . . . ." Lady Clarendon could ſay no more: ſhe hung down her head with a ſigh; but the ſigh was loſt on Sainville. He was ſtanding before her with deſpair in his heart, and incapable of reflection, of obſervation, or even of ſight; the fear of breaking out with too great vehe-

vehemence made him keep a ſilence which lady Clarendon dared not interrupt. At length, collecting all his ſtrength of mind, he ſaid, "I underſtand you, madam, and will obey you. You wiſh for my departure, you know, for I have told you, that on being compelled to leave you, I ſhall adopt the firm reſolve to releaſe you for ever from an unfortunate object, and yet you order me to depart. This is the reward you have reſerved for ſentiments which at leaſt merited your compaſſion. Theſe are the proofs of that friendſhip of which even to-day I have received the aſſurance. You pierce my heart in cold blood, and without neceſſity; you wiſh for my death; nay, you cauſe it: but I fatigue you with uſeleſs complaints. Adieu, madam! adieu for the laſt time!" At theſe words, Sainville deſperately darted towards the door and diſappeared. On his arrival at home he called Roger, and ſaid to him, "I ſhall leave this place in an hour.

hour, let every thing be ready. Tears came into poor Roger's eyes when he heard this order, but he dared not put any queſtions to his maſter, whoſe melancholy and affrighted air checked and diſtreſſed him. Sainville aſked for the baron: Roger mournfully replied, that he alſo was making preparations for his departure. "What!" anſwered Sainville; "for his departure?"—"Yes ſir," ſaid Roger, "two hours ſince he ſent to order poſt-horſes." Sainville, doubting the truth of this unexpected intelligence, immediately quitted Roger, and ran towards the baron's apartment. He found him in a travelling dreſs, with a large hat flapped over his eyes, walking up and down the chamber with haſty ſtrides, and ſurrounded by his ſervants, packing up his clothes and cording his trunks. This ſpectacle infinitely ſurpriſed Sainville; he ſtopped a moment at the door without ſpeaking; then advancing towards the baron, he ſaid, "By

what

what I ſee, Roger was not miſtaken: you are going a journey?"—"Yes," replied the baron coldly, "I mean to return to Paris." Then, without giving any further explanation, he continued his walk. Sainville, in amazement, regarded him without ſpeaking; and the baron did not break the ſilence, except to reprimand his ſervants, and haſten them with equal affectation and ill-humour. From time to time only, he caſt a look from under his hat on Sainville, in order to remark the effect this ſcene had on him. Sainville, impatient, and too much overpowered by his chagrin to aſk for an explanation, left the chamber, and going into an adjoining room, he ſat down on a couch to give looſe to his thoughts, waiting till the baron thought fit to explain. At the end of a quarter of an hour the baron came to him, and ſeating himſelf at the other end of the room, he ſaid, "my conduct, perhaps, aſtoniſhes you, yet, if you will call to mind the agreement made

 between

between us, you will find it is very natural. I was in love with Conſtance before you even thought of her; I ſacrificed my paſſion to you, and I thought that ſuch an effort deſerved gratitude; you promiſed me an entire confidence; I relied on you, and have been deceived; I am in your way, and embarraſs you: ſo, my dear Sainville, we had better part. Notwithſtanding your offenſive reſerve, as I have tolerably good eyes, I know all you could have confided to me. I know that you are happy, and I congratulate you on your felicity. You may very well diſpenſe with the preſence of a witneſs like myſelf. I leave you at the height of your wiſhes; I foretold the event, and am delighted that I divined ſo well." During this long ſpeech, Sainville experienced emotions of impatience and anger, which he could with difficulty ſuppreſs: and feeling he could not reply with moderation, he reſolved to keep ſilence. He contented himſelf with

ſhrugging his ſhoulders; and, falling on the couch, he leant his head on his hands, and was plunged into a profound and mournful reverie. The baron, violently offended with ſuch contemptuous behaviour, roſe, and ſaid, " It is prudent to be ſilent when there are no good reaſons to be given for our conduct. In fact, I believe you would find it difficult to juſtify yourſelf. You have driven me to extremities; I am even perſuaded it was your intention; and the inconceivable manner in which you left me juſt now is a certain proof of it." The baron made a pauſe after every ſentence, expecting always a reply. At length, obſerving he could not obtain one, he was on the point of fully venting his indignation, when Roger entered the apartment, and addreſſing Sainville, ſaid, " Sir, the horſes are put to, and your baggage is in the carriage." The baron at firſt thought that this notice was meant for him; but he was motionleſs with ſurpriſe, when

he heard Sainville ſay to Roger, "It is ſufficient; go and tell Mr. Renaud that I am waiting for him." Roger left the room; and the baron, approaching Sainville, ſaid, "What does all this mean? Your carriage is ready, and you aſk for Mr. Renaud; are you going a journey?"—"Yes," replied Sainville. That *yes*, pronounced with as much coldneſs as ſorrow and ill-humour, completed the baron's amazement. "But," anſwered he, in a low voice, "will it be a long journey?" Sainville replied only with a geſture of impatience, accompanied by a deep ſigh, which afforded a ray of light to the poor baron. He contemplated his friend's countenance. Grief and deſpair were depicted on it; and the baron at length was convinced his conjectures were far diſtant from the truth. This diſcovery, cauſing him to perceive how ridiculous and inopportune the conduct was he had adopted, plunged him into the moſt afflicting and cruel embarraſſment he had ever

ever experienced; and he knew not what ſtep to take: Sainville on a ſudden roſe, and haſtily advanced to the door; the baron ran after him, and ſtopping him, ſaid, "We will not part thus; where are you going? what is your intention?"—"Leave me," replied Sainville; "he who could look on my happineſs with envy, and who conſequently deſires only to ſee my life miſerable, does not deſerve that I ſhould confide my ſecrets to him."—"If you are ungrateful enough," replied the baron, "to hold that ſhocking opinion of my heart, you may go; I aſk for no explanation." Sainville made a motion to go out: "Stop," ſaid the baron, "reflect, that after the reproach which has eſcaped you, if you leave me, you will never ſee me more. . . . . I may have to atone for an unſeaſonable ſally; I may have been ridiculous and too ſuſceptible; but I have not forgotten the rights of a friendſhip of fifteen years duration. At preſent,

go if you dare; I ſhall not detain you." At theſe words, Sainville, without making any reply, returned ſullenly to his former ſeat. The baron ſat down by him, and ſaid, "Come, my friend, let us caſt aſide our anger, and talk together without reſerve." At that moment Mr. Renaud came in: he had a ſmall packet in his hand, thinking that they ſhould ſet out directly for Paris; this appeared to him very natural; for having never in his life made an obſervation foreign to his ſtudies, he thought it very probable that Sainville, not taking any pleaſure in botany and chemiſtry, was tired of the country, and wiſhed to return to court. He advanced towards the two friends, ſaying he was ready; and as no one replied, he aſked if he ſhould have to go into the park to procure a plant he had not yet added to his collection, and which was not to be found in the vicinity of Paris, nor even, he added, *in the Vale of Montmorency*. This queſtion, added

added to his calm and ſerene air, appeared ſo extraordinary to the baron, that he could not refrain from ſmiling; and Sainville, taking up the diſcourſe, told Mr. Renaud that he might go and botanize, and that he ſhould be informed when they were ready to ſet out. Mr. Renaud left the room, and the baron recommenced the explanation in which he had been interrupted. Sainville, at length, being appeaſed, informed the baron of the true ſtate of his heart. After having detailed lady Clarendon's reaſons, he ſaid, "My departure, you perceive, is abſolutely neceſſary; ſhe commands it, and it is, in fact, the only ſtep that is left me."—"Whatever may be the conſequence," ſaid the baron, "you ſhall not go this evening; it will be time enough to-morrow to put in execution ſo mournful a deſign; and I will go inſtantly and countermand your horſes and mine."—"No, no," ſaid Sainville, "I do not chooſe ſhe ſhould think I meant to affect her

her ſeelings by an artifice of which I am incapable; ſhe has received my farewell, and I will go."—"We will undoubtedly go," ſaid the baron, "but it is now night, the horſes are bad, and therefore I will go and give orders for to-morrow." Sainville ſtarted other objections; but at length yielded to the baron's repreſentations, which accorded but too well with his weakneſs and ſecret inclinations. The two friends were in conſultation the whole night, to ſettle what place they ſhould go to. The baron at firſt naturally propoſed Paris; but Sainville declared his determination to travel. "Well then," ſaid the baron, "let us go to Italy." "No," he replied, "Italy is not far enough from Languedoc; when we are taking a violent and afflicting ſtep, the farther we go, the leſs it coſts. There is a certain glory attached to great ſacrifices, which at leaſt ſatisfies our ſelf-love. If I quit lady Clarendon, if I can tear myſelf from her, I wiſh that an im-

menſe diſtance ſhould ſeparate us: when we renounce felicity, and are really unhappy, an indeſcribable feeling induces us to ſeek for the means of aggravating the pains we ſuffer. We are deſirous of diſcovering reaſons to juſtify the deſpair to which we give ourſelves up."—" I ſee, my friend," ſaid the baron, " that we are going to travel to the north. I conſent; I will accompany you whenever you chooſe."—" O heavens!" replied Sainville, what happineſs, what enchanting chimeras am I compelled to renounce! I am going to quit her for ever; yet two days ſince I flattered myſelf I ſhould paſs my life with her. Do you think," he added, " that ſhe can ſee us depart without regret? She will be alone, and given up to her reflections. She will, perhaps, repent. .... If ſhe ſhould invite us to come back..... I will not write to her on the road; but when arrived at the place of our deſtiny, I will inform her of the

frightful diſtance to which I have voluntarily baniſhed myſelf. She imagines, I am certain, that I ſhall not go more than ſixty or ſeventy miles from her. She thinks me weak, and probably incapable of putting in force an extraordinary reſolution. I will undeceive her."— "We muſt, however," ſaid the baron, " decide where we will go." —" Ah!" replied Sainville, " I know not . . . . . ."—" Let us ſet out from Ruſſia . . . . . ."—" Willingly. . . . . ."—" I aſſure you ſhe will be much ſurpriſed when ſhe knows we are in Ruſſia."—" Yes, I think ſhe will," ſaid Sainville; " and I confeſs that when I write to her for the laſt time, I ſhall feel real pleaſure at dating my letter from Peterſbourg." This converſation laſted till morning. At length Sainville perceiving that the baron was almoſt aſleep, and not able to continue it, reſolved to retire to reſt. Before they ſeparated, the two friends determined to ſet out at ten in

 the

the morning; but the baron went to bed, fully convinced that this intended journey would never take place.

The baron had ſcarcely been in his chamber three hours, before Sainville came to him; he opened the curtains, and ſitting down on the bed, he ſaid, " My dear Verceil, we muſt ſtay here, read this letter; he then took out a letter from Conſtance, and read as follows:

' I have maturely reflected on our yeſ-
' terday's converſation, and I do not fear
' to confeſs with the frankneſs which is
' natural to me, that I feel the moſt lively
' anxiety with regard to the ſtep you
' have determined to take: I ſhould wiſh
' it had been dictated by reaſon, and not
' by deſpair. Beſides, it does not ap-
' pear to me juſt, to baniſh you from a
' reſidence which is agreeable to you, and
' which you choſe in preference to every
' other before you were acquainted with
' me.

'me. If my esteem and the tenderest 'friendship do not suffice for your happiness, or afford no consolation to you; if 'my presence disturb your repose; in 'short, if you cannot overcome an enthusiastic passion, but by forgetting me 'entirely, it is I who should depart. 'Confirm to me what you said yesterday, 'repeat those cruel words: *I renounce* '*your friendship, I am not worthy of it*; 'renew the assurance of yesterday, that 'reflection may restore you to yourself, 'I shall believe you, and will instantly quit 'this spot. I should say to myself: *Con-*'*fidence and friendship have no rights to* '*exact of me, he loses only in me an ob-*'*ject of a strong but slight fancy, a similar* '*sentiment is easily replaced*; *and as for me,* '*I do not abandon a friend, and I quit with-*'*out regret a solitude which peace and* '*friendship could alone have rendered dear* '*to me.* Such would be my opinion. 'Yet I am pleased with the thought that 'I did

'I did not deceive myſelf, when I thought 'you a man of genuine ſenſibility and 'ſolid virtue; and if ſo, I dare to tell 'you, that my friendſhip ought to com- 'penſate for the failure of your firſt hopes. 'Thus the plan of an eternal abſence 'would be extravagant, afflicting, and 'cruel. Let us ſeparate for a time, that 'is what I adviſe, but I have not the 'rigour to command it. Love, imperious 'and tyrannical, rules and commands us 'as a deſpot. Friendſhip, gentle and 'compaſſionate, inſtructs and exhorts, but 'tolerates diſobedience. In ſhort, if we 'muſt ſeparate, I beſeech you let me 'be the perſon to depart, or at leaſt, let 'us fix a term of abſence, of which I can 'aſſure you friendſhip will count every mo- 'ment. If you are deſirous we ſhould ſtill 'continue together, I conſent; but yet, 'reaſon and decorum oblige me to im- 'poſe one condition, which is, that you 'will ceaſe to addreſs me in the language

'of

'of a paſſion, which I neither can nor will 'return. I exact this ſacrifice from you, 'it is neceſſary for your tranquillity, and 'conſequently for mine. Be aſſured, we 'cannot triumph over love, if we con- 'tinually permit ourſelves to talk of it; 'we inflame it by depicting it. Baniſh it 'from your converſation, it will occupy 'leſs of your thoughts; it is dangerous 'even to pronounce its name; let it never 'form part of our converſation. Re- 'flect, that it may be the cauſe of our 'ſeparation, and may diſunite us; and that 'without it, our hearts, for ever united by 'the moſt intimate confidence and the 'pureſt of all ſentiments, will afford us 'a felicity, the enjoyment of which time 'will increaſe and fortify, and which nei- 'ther of us as yet has taſted.'

When the baron had finiſhed this letter, he looked on his friend with a ſmile, and ſaid, " Come let us go to Ruſſia to enjoy

enjoy the delicious pleaſure of writing an anſwer dated from Peterſbourg. Ah! Sainville, Sainville," added he, "you are happier than you think or ſhe tells you!"—"No," replied Sainville, "a chimerical hope ſhall not ſeduce me, lady Clarendon has enchanted me paſt recovery; but I ſhould be the moſt contemptible of mankind, if the ſentiments ſhe profeſſes did not conſole me. She loves me, ſhe has told me ſo; ſhe recalls, ſhe detains me; ſhe does not fear to inform me that I am neceſſary to the happineſs of her life; ſhe believes me incapable of abuſing this affecting teſtimony of her friendſhip; ſhe does me juſtice, ſhe reads my heart, or rather diſpoſes of it at her pleaſure; ſhe changes and purifies it; and perhaps one day will make it like her own. I ſhall take care to reſpect her reſolutions, her oaths, and her tranquillity. Her letter, my dear Verceil—her ſo tender letter has produced

produced a revolution in my ſoul which I can ſcarcely conceive. I no longer know myſelf. I never had leſs hope, and yet I am encouraged, nay, ſatisfied. The paſſion which conſumes me, and which is my life, agitates and diſturbs me leſs, though it has loſt none of its violence. Lady Clarendon is ſtill more dear to me, if poſſible! At preſent I feel that her happineſs is more valuable than my own. I know not whether I deceive myſelf, but it appears to me as if ſhe had juſt made me the arbiter of her fate, and that one word only is neceſſary to decide her to comply with my wiſhes, but I ſhould heſitate to pronounce it. Her tears would alarm my imagination, and I ſhould ſacrifice perhaps my own tranquillity to inſure the happineſs of her life."—"I underſtand all this," ſaid the baron. "Conſtance's letter throws light on the true ſtate of your heart, every word developes

velopes a feeling which it is perhaps more eaſy to overcome than to conceal; in ſhort, you ſuſpect you are beloved, and you already ceaſe to complain. Gratitude and joy give you more ſenſibility and more delicacy; lady Clarendon's happineſs now becomes your firſt object. When we doubt the return of our love, we think only of ourſelves, and all our feelings are perſonal; but when we can flatter ourſelves with being beloved, we forget ourſelves in a dearer intereſt, and are generous without effort."—"Ah!" replied Sainville, "if lady Clarendon loved me, would ſhe have had ſo much prudence, ſo much reaſon, and ſuch a command over herſelf? Can love thus fear and calculate conſequences?"—"Yes, undoubtedly," ſaid the baron, "when it has been preceded by a long and fatal experience."

This converſation laſted till dinner-time; Sainville then informed his friend that he had

had immediately anſwered lady Clarendon and expreſſed the gratitude he felt, aſſuring her that he renounced with raptur the dreadful ſacrifice he intended; an that he ſubmitted without a murmur t every condition ſhe required of him.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.